THE NO.1 INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

£2.00
APRIL
1996

WORLD SOCCER

DENMARK DKR. 43.00
GREECE DRA. 900.00
HOLLAND DFL. 9.95
ITALY L 5500.00
MALTA LM 1.45
SPAIN PTAS. 700.00
USA $ 4.95

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Coming to America

Major League Soccer finally kicks off

George Weah

'Why I will leave Italy for Japan'

Newcastle

Saint or sinner? The truth about Asprilla

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Bob Paisley 1919-1996

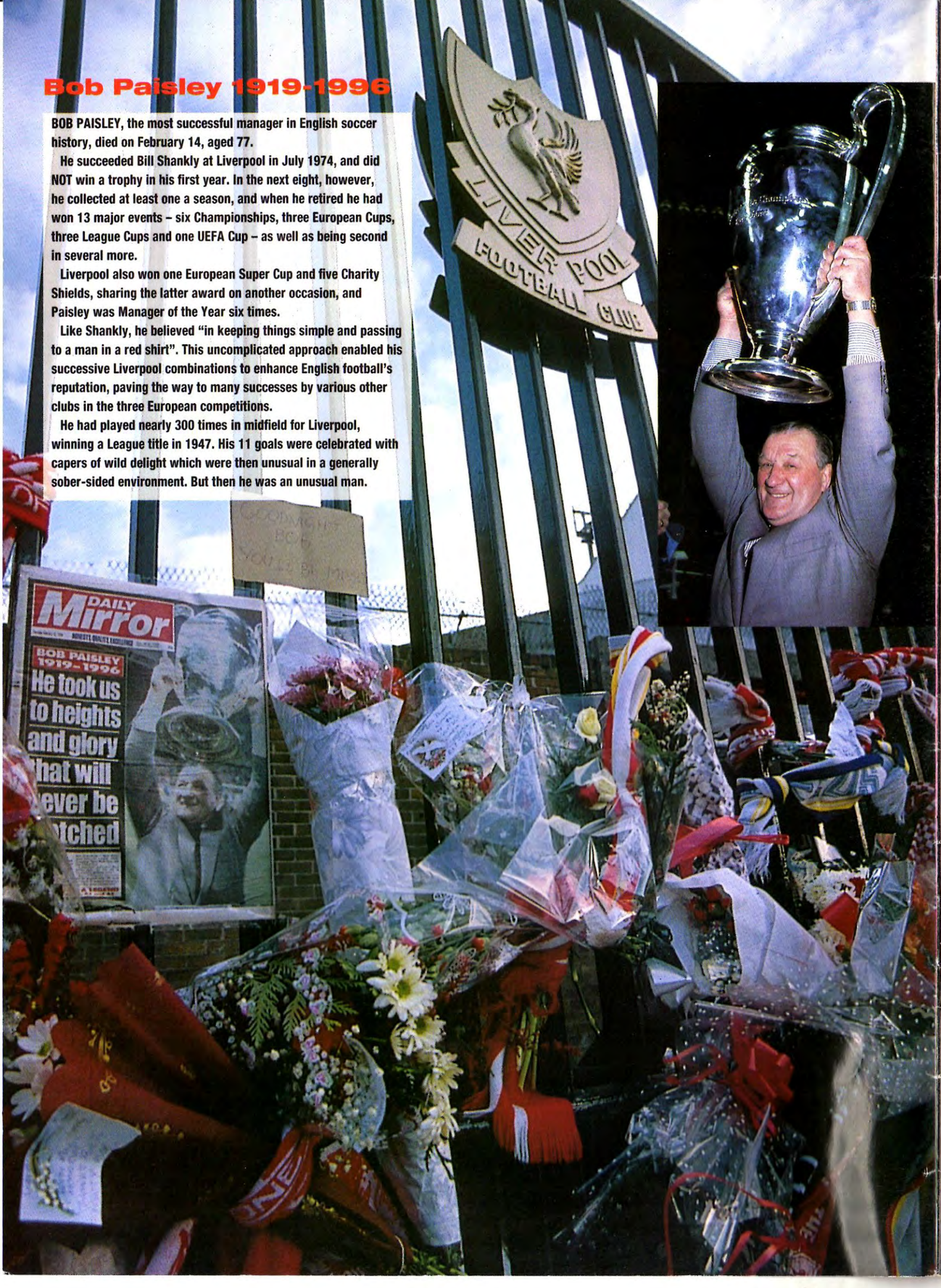
BOB PAISLEY, the most successful manager in English soccer history, died on February 14, aged 77.

He succeeded Bill Shankly at Liverpool in July 1974, and did NOT win a trophy in his first year. In the next eight, however, he collected at least one a season, and when he retired he had won 13 major events – six Championships, three European Cups, three League Cups and one UEFA Cup – as well as being second in several more.

Liverpool also won one European Super Cup and five Charity Shields, sharing the latter award on another occasion, and Paisley was Manager of the Year six times.

Like Shankly, he believed "in keeping things simple and passing to a man in a red shirt". This uncomplicated approach enabled his successive Liverpool combinations to enhance English football's reputation, paving the way to many successes by various other clubs in the three European competitions.

He had played nearly 300 times in midfield for Liverpool, winning a League title in 1947. His 11 goals were celebrated with capers of wild delight which were then unusual in a generally sober-sided environment. But then he was an unusual man.



APRIL 1996
VOL.36 NO.7

WORLD SOCCER, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS

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ipcmagazines
'A commitment to excellence'
Distributed by Marketforce
ABC Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations

SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE
01622 778778

SUBSCRIPTION RATES/INFORMATION (Annual subscription is for 12 months) UK: £24. Airmail Europe (inc. VAT): £30 (airmail). Airmail Zone A (Middle East & Africa): £35. Airmail Zone B (Americas): £40. Airmail Zone C (Australia, Far East and Rest of World): £45. Surface Worldwide: £28. Price includes contribution to postage.
Credit card orders — UK: 01622-721-555.
Send orders to PO Box 272, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH
General enquiries & overseas orders: 01444-445555.
Renewals: 01622 778777.

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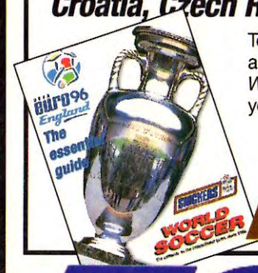

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ESM
EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

The big bang

Major League Soccer, the latest attempt to establish the game in the USA, is about to start at last. Paul Gardner sets the scene . . .

FOUR YEARS in the making, a cast of hundreds, a smattering of super stars, and – bingo! – Major League Soccer is ready to launch itself on to the American sports scene.

When Clash take on Washington DC United in Spartan Stadium, San Jose, on April 6, the wishes of FIFA, the dreams of American soccer fans, and the hard work of Alan Rothenberg and Co will at last become reality.

American soccer will be paying off a debt to FIFA. That was the deal: in 1990, when FIFA awarded the 1994 World Cup to the United States Soccer Federation, the unwritten agreement was that the excitement and enthusiasm aroused by the tournament would be used as the springboard to launch a national pro league.

It was all a bit vague in those days, but talk of starting the league *before* the World Cup was totally unrealistic – preparations for the tournament were taking up all of everyone's time and attention.

In late 1993, Rothenberg – President of the USSF and the man running the World Cup – came up with a business plan. The league, to be called Major League Soccer, would start in April 1995. But the plan was mostly words: the necessary financial backing was conspicuously lacking.

The quest for big-time investors took longer than anticipated. By late 1994 the eternally-optimistic Rothenberg had to admit that MLS would not be ready for 1995. The launch was postponed for a year, which gave everyone plenty of time to ponder the unusual structure that the MLS was to assume.

The words 'single entity' entered the American soccer vocabulary. The MLS would be a single-entity league. Meaning that the league itself would sign and own all the players, would appoint the coaches and general managers of all the clubs, would organise all the important activities centrally – television, marketing deals, sponsorship and so on.

Socialised soccer, taunted the critics. The main idea behind the scheme was to stop clubs from bankrupting each other by getting involved in bidding wars over players. With the league office controlling all the signings, there would be no competition. As MLS deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati put it: "The owners are competitors on the field, but from a business perspective they're partners."

Evidently, the ghost of the old North American Soccer League was haunting the MLS. The NASL, founded in 1968, went down the tubes in 1984 because New York Cosmos were so much richer than everyone else that they simply bought success – and the other clubs all went belly-up trying to keep pace.

The single-entity concept would put a stop to that sort of thing. But to some the idea sounded even worse than socialised soccer; it sounded like a cartel, which would be a breach of America's pretty draconian anti-trust laws.

Would not a single-entity MLS be taking away the players' bargaining powers? But the MLS lawyers (and at times it seemed that the MLS employed nothing but lawyers) insisted that all was legal.

Legal it may have been, but it didn't fly. The investors were being asked to buy a $10million share of the league. Ten such investors and Rothenberg would have the $100 million that he said MLS needed. After that the investors would simply sit back and watch the League run things.

The problem resided in the nature of American businessmen. Those likely to think about investing in a sports league were clearly not interested in playing a totally passive role. They wanted to run a club, they wanted a piece of the excitement and glamour and visibility of being involved in pro sports. No way were they anonymous, grey-suited investors.

So the single entity idea was substantially modified. An investor would now have to pay only $5million. But for $10million you could be in a new category – an owner-investor. Which meant you were investing in the league and you got to run your own club. And, Rothenberg vowed at the end of 1994, substantial Japanese investment was on the way.

The Japanese money never materialised, but by June 1995 seven American owner-investors were assembled. With one notable exception, they were all new to soccer. They included John Kluge (rated as America's third richest man with a personal fortune of nearly $7billion), and Robert Kraft, owner of the gridiron New England Patriots of the National Football League.

The exception was Lamar Hunt, who had been one of the staunchest investors in the old NASL, the league that had brought Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Johan Cruyff and George Best to the States.

The MLS, said Rothenberg, was now financially sound, with a name, a logo, and 10 clubs. That is to say, it had 10 cities – the clubs were not yet formed. Seven – New York/New Jersey, Boston, Washington, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Columbus and Colorado – would be owner-operated. The MLS would run Dallas, Tampa and San Jose.

There was another significant development. The MLS had signed its first two players: US national team midfielder Tab Ramos, and the flamboyant Mexican goalkeeper/striker Jorge Campos. Sponsors were soon on board, as MLS announced agreements with the likes of adidas, Nike and Reebok. The next step in the curiously backward progress of the MLS came with the announcement of a television contract with *ESPN* and *ABC*. Yes, *ESPN* and *ESPN-2* would televise 35 games live, *ABC* would do the final – all this for a league without any named clubs, with no coaches, only a handful of players, and certainly without a fixture list!

Throughout the second half of 1995, the MLS announced a slow, steady stream of signings. One or two foreign stars, certainly – the biggest was Bolivia's Marco Etcheverry – but mostly Americans. Some were well-known: John Harkes, Tony Meola, Alexi Lalas, Eric Wynalda, Roy Wegerle and Mike Sorber. But the bulk of the Americans signed were young and mostly unknown.

'The striptease was almost complete. The outer garments – team names, logos and stadiums – were waved before the media . . . then the really sexy stuff, the unveiling of the coaches'

The MLS strip-tease approach to revealing itself continued. At the end of 1995 it announced an 'unveiling' at which suspense was presumably supposed to hang heavy in the air, with salivating soccer fans yelling More! More!

Something like that. By now the disrobing was almost complete. The outer vestments – team names, colours, logos, stadiums and ticket prices – were waved before the media.

The stadiums had presented a huge problem. Rothenberg had called them the biggest obstacle to success. What was needed was 10, first-class, mid-size (say 20,000 capacity), soccer stadiums. And there were none to be found. There were stadiums that were the right size, but they usually belonged to high schools or colleges, and were certainly not of major league calibre.

The stadiums of that were of the required calibre were invariably too big, usually way too big. The answer was to open up only certain areas of the stadium, to "downsize" the stadiums as Rothenberg put it, by "attractively draping off" whole tiers or sections.

Thus Giants Stadium, which once upon a time Cosmos filled, would be downsized from 77,000 to 26,691 *(see table, right)*. It was the only possible answer to an intractable problem, but it was not a good advertisement for the expected drawing power of the league.

Then the MLS got down to the real sexy stuff, the unveiling of the coaches. This had been a real tease, with the final choices somewhat at variance with the rumours. Jack Charlton would go to Boston – well, you need an Irishman, even an Anglo-Irishman, in that city. A genuine Irishman, Frank Stapleton, eventually turned up.

For the New York/New Jersey Metrostars, top names were mentioned. It would have to be an Italian, of course, so Arrigo Sacchi's name was bandied about. If not Sacchi, then maybe the Brazilian Carlos Alberto, who starred for New York Cosmos in the late 1970s. Instead, 62-year-old Eddie Firmani, who coached Cosmos in their glory days, arrived.

For San Jose Clash, the tip was ex-Portugal star Tony Simoes. Reality arrived in the form of Englishman Laurie Calloway.

A decidedly mixed bag. Some, like Firmani, Stapleton, and Englishman Bob Houghton of Colorado Rapids, were known to soccer fans outside the United States. Others, like Calloway and David Dir of Dallas Burn, had recognition problems even within the USA.

One contradiction stood out. The MLS had been going for Latin players. No British, indeed no Europeans, had been signed. Yet of the 10 coaches (seven picked by the owner-investors) five had a British background. Not one was Latin. But six of the assistant coaches were Hispanic.

Meanwhile, the top end of the MLS had been undergoing some changes. Rothenberg had been expected to run the league. Indeed, in one of the early MLS business plans, he had positioned himself as the commissioner at a salary of $1million. But the owner-investors were not delighted with that arrangement.

The scene changed and by the end of 1995 it was clear that Rothenberg was no longer the all-powerful chief. MLS announced that it was looking for a commissioner, and Rothenberg would become the chairman, in more of an advisory role.

The new commissioner arrived in December: Doug Logan, a man with much experience in starting business enterprises, but with no knowledge of soccer. He would rely heavily on his deputy, Sunil Gulati. Soon afterwards, it became known that the league would be moving from Los Angeles to New York – something that would further reduce the involvement of the LA-based Rothenberg.

By the end of last year, the soccer part of the picture was much clearer. The MLS had signed over 200 players. The trick now was to get them distributed to the clubs.

This was to be done in the traditional American way of a player draft. From the pool of players, each club

(Cont'd overleaf)

WHO'S PLAYING WHERE

CLUB	STADIUM	CAPACITIES (ACTUAL/MLS)	
Columbus Crew	Ohio	96,400	18,748
New England Revolution	Foxboro	60,312	22,385
NY/NJ Metrostars	Giants	77,000	26,691
Tampa Bay Mutiny	Tampa	74,317	16,000
Washington DC United	RFK	56,500	23,865
Colorado Rapids	Mile High	76,123	18,500
Dallas Burn	Cotton Bowl	67,700	25,425
Kansas City Wiz	Arrowhead	73,873	27,528
Los Angeles Galaxy	Rose Bowl	100,092	28,000
San Jose Clash	Spartan	31,000	19,166

WESTERN CONFERENCE

COLORADO RAPIDS

Assigned players: Marcelo Balboa (D), Dominic Kinnear (M), Roy Wegerle (F), Shaun Bartlett (F, SA).
Goalkeeper: Khalil Azmi (Mor).
Defenders: Denis Hamlett, Steve Trittschuh, Brian Bates, Troy Edwards, Scott Cannon, Matt Kmosko, Ian Butterworth (Eng), Josh McKay.
Midfielders: Felipe Rodriguez, Brian Hurley, Joel Shanker.
Forwards: Jean Harbor, Scott Benedetti, Lance Hill, Eric Puls.

COLORADO RAPIDS
GM: Rich Levine
Coach: Bob Houghton
555 17th St
Suite 3350
Denver CO 80202
Tel: 303 299-1570
Fax: 303 299-1580

DALLAS BURN

Assigned players: Hugo Sanchez (F, Mex), Leonel Alvarez (M, Col), Washington Rodriguez (M, Uru), Mark Santel (M).
Goalkeeper: Mark Dodd.
Defenders: Tom Soehn, Lawrence Lozzano, Jimmy McGeough, Ed Puskarich.
Midfielders: Brian Haynes (T & T), Rene Ortiz, Gerell Elliot, Jorge Flores, Steve Keller, Gabriel Gentile.
Forwards: John Kerr, Ted Eck, Jason Kreis, Richard Farrer, Jimmy Glenn.

DALLAS BURN
GM: Billy Hicks
Coach: David Dir
2602 McKinney, Suite 200
Dallas TX 75204
Tel: 214 979-0303
Fax: 214 979-1118

KANSAS CITY WIZ

Assigned players: Preki (M, Yug), Frank Klopas (F), Vitalis Takawira (F, Zim), Mike Sorber (M).
Goalkeepers: Jeff Causey, Phil Wellington.
Defenders: Sean Bowers, Uche Okafor (Nig), Terry Woodbury, Samuel Ekeme (Cameroon).
Midfielders: Mark Chung, Scott Uderitz, Kevin Koetters, Billy Baumhoff.
Forwards: Peter Isaacs (Jam), Eric Eichmann, Tommy Reasoner, Nyanforh Peters, Alan Prampin, Ken Snow.

KANSAS CITY WIZ
GM: Tim Latta
Coach: Ron Newman
706 Broadway St
Suite 100
Secaucus
Kansas City MO 64105

LOS ANGELES GALAXY

Assigned players: Jorge Campos (GK, F, Mex), Eduardo Hurtado (F, Ecu), Mauricio Cienfuegos (M, El S), Dan Calichman (D).
Goalkeeper: David Kramer.
Defenders: Robin Fraser, Mark Semioli, Curt Onalfo, Manny Motajo.
Midfielders: Jorge Salcedo, Joey Leonetti, John O'Brien, Brad Wilson, David Beall, Carlos Jaguande.
Forwards: John Garvey, Joey Kirk, Harut Karapetyan, Adan Villalvazo, Garfield Shaw (Jam).

LOS ANGELES GALAXY
GM: Danny Villanueva Jr
Coach: Lothar Osiander
1640 S Sepulveda Blvd
Los Angeles CA 90025
Tel: 310 445-1260
Fax: 310 445-1270

SAN JOSE CLASH

Assigned players: Eric Wynalda (F), John Doyle (D), Ben Iroha (D, Nig), Michael Ermenalo (M, Nig).
Goalkeepers: Dave Salzwedel, Tom Liner.
Defenders: Tim Martin, Oscar Draguicevich, Rafael Amaya.
Midfielders: Paul Bravo, Altimont Butler (Jam), Rhett Harty, Paul Holocher, Henry Gutierrez, Kevin Grimes.
Forwards: Jeff Baicher, Jeff Betts, Victor Mella (Chi), Gabe Garcia, Carlos Farias.

SAN JOSE CLASH
GM: Peter Bridgwater
Coach: Laurie Calloway
1265 El Camino Real
Santa Clara CA 95050
Tel: 408 241-9922
Fax: 408 554-8886

Player Rosters correct at February 21, 1996
GM = general manager GK = goalkeeper D = defender M = midfielder F = forward

(from previous page)

makes a choice in turn. Usually, the club that gets the first pick is the weakest club, the club that finished bottom last season. As the MLS had no previous records to go by, another way had to be worked out.

It was based on each club list of four 'assigned players'.

The top MLS signings – Etcheverry, Carlos Valderrama, Roberto Donadoni – would not go through the draft. They were assigned to specific clubs, mostly on the basis of their ethnic drawing power. New York's large Italian population meant that Donadoni was assigned to Metrostars; Campos went to Los Angeles with its large Mexican-American population, Etcheverry to Washington, where many Bolivians live, and so on.

Other top players were assigned on the basis of club requests until each club had four assigned players. When all was done, Columbus had come off worst – so they got the first pick in the draft. Washington – with John Harkes, Etcheverry, plus Bolivian player-of-the-year Chicho Suarez and Jeff Agoos – were considered to have the strongest quartet, so they got to pick last.

The draft consisted of 16 rounds, with 160 players taken by the 10 clubs. The curiosity of the process was that the coaches were selecting players not only on their talent, but on their price tag.

All the players in the pool had signed contracts, at varying levels, with MLS. By referring to a list supplied by the league, the coaches could tell exactly how much they would have to pay each player.

At the end of the draft, on February 7, all 10 MLS clubs had 20 players. But that was not the end of the story. A supplementary draft is coming up in March. This time the player pool would include a group of some 25 young South Americans – mostly Brazilians, but including some Argentinians. Only after that would the player rosters be cut back to the required 18.

Part of the adjustment would involve financial calculations. Because part of the single-entity arrangement (shades of those high-spending Cosmos again!) was that each club would stick to a salary cap of $1.3million.

That's right . . . $1.3million, for all 18 players. That works out at an average of $72,000 per player. So, any idea of the MLS as a big-spending league goes right out of the window. Most of the players in the draft had been signed at the MLS rock-bottom figure of $25,000. Is it possible to live on $25,000 a year? Not in New York, it ain't – yet there is no New York weighting.

Which leaves the big question unanswered. How can stars like Donadoni and Etcheverry and Campos – who must be worth $1million a year each – be fitted into a $1.3 million cap? Answer: with a little help from our sponsors.

Donadoni is rumoured to be getting around $1million; but most of it will come from sponsorship deals.

Thinking big

But will bigger goals mean more goals?

MLS will be a primarily American league, with a sprinkling of foreign players – the limit is four per team. But foreign-born players living permanently in the USA (holders of the Immigration Department's green card) count as US citizens.

What will the level of play be in the MLS? Alan Rothenberg has spoken on that: "It will not be the Bundesliga or Serie A – but the play will be wide-open and attractive, the players will have to be aggressive and skillful." Aggressive, that is, in the American sports sense of being hard workers.

As for attractive play, the MLS had been expected to introduce a number of rule changes to make sure they got what Americans are supposed to want: more scoring.

Last season, the USISL, a nationwide semi-pro league, conducted a whole range of experiments – they included using a timekeeper who stopped the clock every time the ball went out of play, counting the number of fouls committed by individual players and by teams, penalising those who went over an established limit, larger goals, and counting corner kicks as a tie breaker.

The only one that has survived is the idea of larger goals. And the pressure for this is coming from FIFA, rather then MLS, which is not all that happy to be used, alone, as a guinea-pig league. Games that are drawn after extra time will be decided by a shoot-out.

Another bone of contention that has yet to be resolved is the matter of reserve teams and player development. The old NASL was heavily criticised because it never got round to fielding reserve teams, so that reserve players (mostly Americans) often got little playing time at any level. The MLS is working on an arrangement with the USISL, which would serve as a development and feeder league.

As kick-off time approached, the MLS was hoping for a league-wide crowd average of between 10,000-12,000. "The most important thing will be those first home games," said Sunil Gulati. "We've got to give the fans excitement and entertainment in those games, so that they want to come back."

Doug Logan, sweating his way through his crash-course introduction to soccer felt "like I'm about ready to give birth. It's a massive undertaking, but I'm finding there's a genuine feeling of goodwill out there, the public really want this to succeed. Media reaction has been extraordinarily positive – I think we're going to be given an even opportunity to prove ourselves."

Sunil sets the style

MAJOR LEAGUE Soccer has been called the Sunil Gulati Fantasy League, in which all the big attraction players have been selected by deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati.

MLS man . . . Sunil G

One man has had a decisive influence on all the players, and hence the playing style, of an entire league. Even Silvio Berlusconi never wielded that sort of power!

Gulati was born in Allahabad, India, in 1959. In 1964 his family moved to the USA. To Connecticut, a hotbed of youth soccer. He grew up playing, acquired coaching and refereeing licences, and entered soccer administration, progressing quickly from the state to the national level.

There was also time for a degree in economics, post-graduate work at Bucknell University, and a professorship at Columbia University. Then came a year working at the World Bank, all the time doubling as chairman of the United States Soccer Federation's National Team committee.

The pull of soccer became overwhelming in the build-up to World Cup 94. Gulati left the bank to work full-time for the organising committee.

From the World Cup it was a logical step to the MLS. Even more logical, Gulati's soccer background made him the MLS player expert. But he rejects the *supremo* idea: "Most of the players in this league are Americans, and I have had little to do with selecting them. The foreign stars – yes, they're pretty much my choice."

Players like Marco Etcheverry, Carlos Valderrama, Hugo Sanchez, Jorge Campos, Roberto Donadoni and Adrian Paz reflect Gulati's preferences.

Favourite team? "Brazil, always."

Favourite player: "I guess Pele, though in my time, nobody has done better than Maradona in the 1986 World Cup." Favourite game from World Cup 94? "Brazil v Holland."

No surprise then that Gulati readily admits, "Yes, I like Latin soccer, I find it the most entertaining. Most of the players we've signed are those who exemplify a commitment to attacking, entertaining soccer."

No English players, then? "No, we haven't really looked there. We've said something very important about the style we want this league to have, and we've stuck to that. Also, if we applied the same standards to English players coming here as the English apply to our players going there, we'd have a tough time bringing in English players anyway."

Gulati estimates that he's travelled over 275,000 miles during the past year in search of players. There were days like this: breakfast in Frankfurt, flight to Milan to talk with Donadoni's agent, then off to London to meet Colorado coach Bob Houghton, followed by a transatlantic flight and dinner in New York with MLS Commissioner Doug Logan.

Plus the usual surprise moments. When he visited Chile to sign Etcheverry from Colo Colo, he was met by the player's agent Ruben Morales. Morales pulled out a photo of himself playing for Fort Lauderdale Strikers in the old North American Soccer League, back in 1981.

You have to exercise "due diligence" in signing players, have to establish they're worth the money. On a visit to the Santa Cruz youth club Tahuichi in Bolivia – where Etcheverry learned his soccer – Gulati was taken to a training session for 40 12-year-olds. "Who is the best player in Bolivia?" he asked them. "Etcheverry!" screamed 40 high-pitched voices. Was more proof needed?

> ***'I had little to do with selecting the Americans. The foreign stars – yes, they're pretty much my choice'***

Now that the player-signing is over, what next for Sunil Gulati? "Maybe a role in setting up youth development," he says, "or organising international games."

He's done some of that, organising the annual US Cup since 1992. He's particularly proud that, from those games, over $1million has been given to UNICEF and the Children's Defence Fund.

Coming up on July 14: the FIFA All-Star Charity game at Giants Stadium in New Jersey. Gulati will be in charge of that one, too.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER
2029 Century Park East
Suite 400
Los Angeles CA 90067
Tel: 310 772-2600
Fax: 310 843-4836

EASTERN CONFERENCE

COLUMBUS CREW

COLUMBUS CREW
GM: Jamey Rootes
Coach: Timo Liekoski
77 E Nationwide Boulevard
Columbus OH 43215
Tel: 614 221-2739
Fax: 614 221-5050

Assigned players: Brian Bliss (D), Doctor Khumalo (M, SA), Brian Maisonneuve (M), Adrian Paz (F, Uru).
Goalkeeper: Bo Oshoniyi.
Defenders: Mark Watson, Michael Clark, Ramiro Corales, Shane Batelle, Lawrence Piturro.
Midfielders: Brandon Ward, Janusz Michallik, Todd Yeagley, Paul Young, Todd Haskins, Manny Catano.
Forwards: Brian McBride, Billy Thompson, Marcelo Carrera, Pete Marino

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTON

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION
GM: Brian O'Donovan
Coach: Frank Stapleton
Foxboro Stadium, Route 1
Foxboro MA 02035
Tel: 508 543-0350
Fax: 508 543-1409

Assigned players: Mike Burns (M), Giuseppe Galderisi (F,Ita), Alexi Lalas (D), Jim St Andre (GK).
Goalkeeper: Jim Adams.
Defenders: Iain Fraser (Can), Peter Woodring, Ted Chronopoulos, Tom Lips, Richard Weiszmann.
Midfielders: Yari Allnutt, John DeBrito, Geoff Aunger (Can), Antonio Superbia (Bra), Jorge Alamendi.
Forwards: Bojan Vukovic, Marquis White, Rob Ukrop, Darren Sawatzky, Derk Droze.

NY/NJ METROSTARS

NY/NJ METROSTARS
GM: Charlie Stillitano
Coach: Eddie Firmani
One Harmon Plaza, 8th floor
NJ 07094

Assigned players: Roberto Donadoni (M, Ita), Tab Ramos (M), Tony Meola (GK), Damian Silvera (M).
Goalkeeper: Zach Thornton.
Defenders: Matt Knowles, Troy Dayak, Jeff Zaun, Pat O'Kelly, Andrew Restrepo.
Midfielders: Ted Gillen, Micky Kydes, Nidal Baba, Walter Bustamante.
Forwards: Peter Vermes, Eddie Soto, Giovanni Savarese (Ven), Khary Stockton, Jorge Acosta, AJ Wood.

TAMPA BAY MUTINY

TAMPA BAY MUTINY
GM: Farrukh Quraishi
Coach: Thomas Rongen
1408 N Westshore Blvd Suite 1004
Tampa FL 33607
Tel: 813 288-0096
Fax: 813 288-2085

Assigned players: Carlos Valderrama (M, Col), Cle Kooiman (D), Roy Lassiter (F), Martin Vasquez (M, Mex).
Goalkeepers: Mark Dougherty, Scott Budnick.
Defenders: Frank Yallop (Can), Frankie Hejduk, Tayt Ianni.
Midfielders: Peter Hattrup, John Diffley, Ivan McKinley, Mike Duhaney, Derek Backman, Nelson Vargas, Zenon Luzniak, Greg Lalas.
Forwards: Diego Viera, Flavio Ferri, Goran Hunjak.

WASHINGTON DC UNITED

WASHINGTON DC UNITED
GM: Kevin Payne
Coach: Bruce Arena
13832 Redskin Drive
Herndon VA 22071
Tel: 703 478-6600
Fax: 703 736-9451

Assigned players: Marco Etcheverry (M, Bol), Chicho Suarez (F, Bol), John Harkes (M), Jeff Agoos (D).
Goalkeepers: Mile Milovac (Yug), Garth Lagerwey, Matthew Olson.
Defenders: Erik Imler, Thor Lee, Kris Kelderman, Clint Peay, Said Fazlagic.
Midfielders: Shawn Medved, Richie Williams, Brian Kamler, Daniel De Oliveira (Ven), Carlos Garcia.
Forwards: Raul Diaz Arce (El S), Ben Crawley, Sterling Wescott.

Keir Radnedge

COMMENTARY

Give Helmut his due

BOTH Helmut Schön and Bob Paisley, managerial giants of the European game in quite separate spheres, died after years suffering from Alzheimer's Disease.

Schön was possibly the greatest national manager of all time – just look at his magnificent record in World Cups and European Championships – while Paisley was the most outstanding achiever even known to English football; his trophy haul outshines that of even Busby.

How sad, then, that both men died with only a far-faded recollection of the great triumphs which earned them the admiration and thanks of so many millions.

Paisley turned Liverpool from ambitious dreamers into stylish pragmatists; Schön launched the greatest era in German football history. Both masterminded great, single match achievements. Paisley I will always picture in triumph in Rome after that intial Champions Cup win in 1977; Schön smiling shyly at the celebratory antics of his West German World Cup- winners in 1974.

Schön also provided European football with a lesson in sportsmanship – NOT fair play but real, original, honest and honorable sportsmanship – after the controversial defeat by England at the 1966 World Cup and by the perhaps even more remarkable defeat by 4-3 at the hands of Italy in the 1970 World Cup semi-finals.

Wouldn't Euro 96 be the appropriately ideal occasion at which European football should pay him tribute?

Strange rule may cause a split

ITALY may be about to break ranks over the Atlanta Olympic Games. UEFA has used the European Under-21 championship as the qualifying event even though the Games are, as a compromise, an under-23 tournament.

If that is not one slight handicap, UEFA then agreed that none of its representatives in Atlanta should take advantage of the 'wild card' allowance of three over-age players.

The rule-that-isn't was conjured up for two reasons. One was to placate the International Olympic Committee, which wanted the top full national teams to compete; the other was to placate the Americans, who need some big names to help promote soccer at the Games (even though the football tournament is being played just about anywhere EXCEPT Atlanta).

Remember Bruce Grobbelaar and how he had dreamed of playing at the Olympics as an over-age player should Zimbabwe qualify?

UEFA took their anti-over-age stance for another two reasons. One was to support FIFA in their refusal to allow the Olympic Games to be turned into an alternative World Cup; the other was to avoid a furious rebellion from top clubs who, right on the eve of the new season, would refuse to free their players for Olympic duty. Particularly, of course, players who might not have ended the 1995-96 season until the closing stages of the European Championship in late June.

Now, different countries bring their players through at different ages. Spain's Javier Clemente has two teenagers with magnificent potential in Real Madrid's Raul Gonzalez and Barcelona's Ivan De la Pena. He is happy to consider holding them back for the Olympic defence.

Not so Italy, where opportunities are rare for teenage prodigies. Thus Cesare Maldini, manager alternately of the under-21s and the Olympic team, takes a more pragmatic line. He is aware that Brazil will use the over-age rule to fuel their ambition for a first Olympic crown. And Maldini, always a grand competitor, wants to go head to head with Brazil without having one hand tied behind his back.

Already Maldini has expressed his concern that national coach Arrigo Sacchi is toying with the idea of promoting under-21 starlets such as Atlanta's Morfeo and Sampdoria's Chiesa into the squad for Euro. Even, believe it or not, at the expense of Roberto Baggio.

"In that case," says Maldini, "perhaps we should think again about the conditions under which we will play in Atlanta. Brazil and Argentina want to win the Olympics and they will take the best possible players. But we want to win, as well. There is no point playing if we are not serious about winning. Perhaps, when UEFA considered the matter originally, the situation was different. We didn't know how other countries would respond.

"Now we do."

Looking to Atlanta . . . Cesare Maldini

Dead or alive

DO NOT believe, for one moment, now UEFA has accepted that the three-plus-two rule is dead, that the confusion over foreign players ends there.

Is the rule dead only for the European Union countries or will it still serve to restrict clubs from non-EU countries? That, surely, would be unfair.

Consider, however, if foreign player restrictions are lifted as far as non-EU clubs are concerned then they will be empowered to use as many non-EU citizens as they like as well as unlimited numbers of EU citizens.

Still with me?

So . . . if non-EU clubs are granted total freedom to play foreign players then, to maintain the fairplay concept about which the international federations are so proud, it necessarily follows that EU clubs must be allowed total freedom of choice. This means freedom of choice among both EU citizens and non-EU citizens.

After all, it would not be proper, would it, to discriminate between one set of nationalities and another?

On the last lap

JAPAN and South Korea are now into the last lap of their duel to win hosting rights to the first World Cup of the next millenium in 2002.

Japan is favourite, South Korea is coming up fast in the vote-gathering business with its support for UEFA's Vision proposals and the possible help of North Korea. D Day is June 1. Then the scramble for 2006 begins . . .

Silly Asprilla

REMEMBER how Manchester City, walking away wih the English League title, once bought Rodney Marsh to strengthen their attack . . . and fell apart?

Will history repeat itself following Tino Asprilla's late arrival to join the Newcastle United party? His physical tussle with Manchester City's Keith Curle created the sort of fuss Newcastle can do without if they are to keep their eye on the prize.

Paying the game . . . Sky cameras on location

Pay-per-view won't go away

WE RARELY stray into other sports. For one thing, if you wanted to read about another pursuit you would buy one of our sister publications and not this one.

But the controversy over pay-per-view television which has been raised by Sky TV's promotion of Frank Bruno's heavyweight championship confrontation with Mike Tyson concerns everyone in sport – participant and spectator alike.

Each sport tends to exist in blinkers. To some extent that is understandable. Soccer, tennis, rugby, golf, cricket all compete for handouts from the same television and sponsorship pots. But there are many issues on which they could gain from pooling resources and concerns.

For instance, European football's abject failure to heed the warning signs of the original Bosman case – five years back – has brought consequences of major concern to many more sports. Basketball has suddenly found itself having to wrestle with the European Court's verdict on foreign players not only because football did not take early evasive action – but because football did not warn other sports what was happening in its own legal backyard.

Now football talks optimistically of the Italians – current holders of the European political presidency – introducing an exclusion clause for sport to append to the Treaty of Rome. Are they serious? Italy has its own ongoing political crisis to resolve; who has time to worry about some sporting curio?

If sport has learned anything, long-term, from Bosman then it must be the need to talk over matters of common concern – and pay-per-view is one of them.

Time is running short. Pay-per-view is here. That's why the German, French and Italian renegotiations for TV football have proved so complex. They are taking on board the imminence of pay-per-view. That is why the Dutch federation has gone into the television business – to hold a controlling financial and administrative stake in pay-per-view. And why is that crucial?

Because only if the football authorities can control the raising and sharing of TV money can they direct, into the grassroots of the game, the funds necessary to fill the gap about to be left by the wholesale collapse of the transfer system.

Pay-per-view is inevitable. It's the form which needs serious consideration. In advance.

The reason Sky has hit such a wall of antagonism over its plans to go PPV for Bruno v Tyson is the almost sneaky way it was done. Subscribers signed up, and committed their cash, without any proper notification of precisely when, or in which specific circumstances, major sporting events would be ringed off.

Sky will have learned the lesson. When it comes to football I have no doubt that, somewhere in its next contract, due formulation of the manner of its introduction will be set down. Sky will be ready . . . but will English football have all the clauses covered?

Libero

Both halves of Merseyside paid their respects at Bob Paisley's funeral last month. The floral tributes included wreaths from Everton and Liverpool football clubs.

Sole survivor

WE reported in the July 1994 issue of *WORLD SOCCER* on the whereabouts of the last surviving member of the USA 1930 World Cup squad. It was believed to be James Brown, who died in November 1994. Now news reaches us from Colin Jose in Canada of Philip Sloane, who did not play for the US in their three games in Montevideo, but did line up in a friendly against Brazil when the Americans were on their way home. Sloane, who played for New York Giants in the American Soccer League, is now 89 and divides his time between homes in Florida and New York state.

Shirt Tales

St Etienne

SAINT ETIENNE are not known as *Les Verts* for nothing. The club, who dominated French football in the 1960s and 1970s, were founded by grocer Geoffrey Guichard in 1920. Guichard, after opening his first shop in the old Saint Etienne casino, went on to create one of France's biggest retail chains, Casino, with over 2,000 shops and supermarkets. The shop colours were green and white, so it was natural that Guichard's football team should wear a green and white strip. Rumours that Sheffield Wednesday were founded by a Mr Tesco have yet to be confirmed.

Turkey trot could run and run

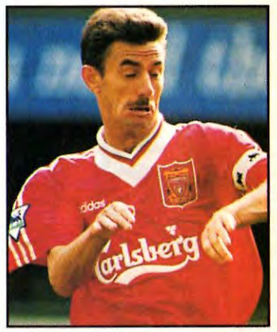
TURKEY may not be many people's favourites for Euro 96, but they could go into the finals with the longest unbeaten run of any of the finalists. Fatih Terim's side are currently unbeaten in 16 games, two more than Spain's 14, but 15 short of Hungary's record of 31, set between 1950 to 1954.

The longest unbeaten runs of all-time

Hungary	31	1950-54	Romania	18	1974-75
Germany	23	1978-80	East Germany	17	1973-74
Scotland	22	1879-86	Rep. Ireland	17	1989-90
England	22	1880-86	Turkey	16	1995-
Czechoslovakia	22	1974-76	Holland	15	1973-74
Soviet Union	20	1980-82	Austria	14	1931-32
Italy	19	1937-39	Denmark	14	1908-18
		1989-91	Sweden	14	1962-64
			Norway	14	1994-95
France	19	1989-91	Spain	14	1994-

Lip service

"We have been cast in the role of the Big Bad Wolf. It is an anomaly that they are world class but not club class" – PFA chief Gordon Taylor on Ilie Dumitrescu, Marc Hottiger and their work permit problems.



"My heart is still here with Liverpool and probably always will be. But I am a professional footballer and must look to the future. I have always said I would like to finish here, but it's not to be" – Anfield goalscoring legend Ian Rush on the free transfer he will be given by Liverpool this summer.

"In league play we surely will respect the rule about three foreigners. As for the UEFA Cup, we certainly won't be the first team to make a revolution" – A veiled threat from Milan spokesman Paolo Tarozzi on the implications of the Bosman ruling.

"Tino is a Latin and that's how they are sometimes" – Kevin Keegan on £6.7m signing Faustino Asprilla's run-in with Manchester City's Keith Curle.

£OOTBALL £INANCIAL

United hit the Umbro jackpot

Manchester United have clinched British (and quite possibly, world) football's biggest kit deal after tying themselves to Umbro for the next six years. United chairman Martin Edwards would not reveal the full value of the deal, which will run until 2002, but it is believed to be in excess of £40million.

Judge gives shirt shrift

THE KEEGAN REVOLUTION on Tyneside has not reached the law courts, it seems. Lee Drinkeld recently appeared before Newcastle Crown Court on a burglary charge wearing a Newcastle United shirt. Judge Jim Stephenson was not impressed.

"I don't think Sir John Hall and Kevin Keegan would be happy to see a shirt paraded in such a manner. It is not appropriate dress for court," he said. "Anyway, I'm a Sunderland supporter."

The judge's comments provoked uproar in the public gallery as Drinkeld's friends hurled abuse at the "Mackem" on the bench. Police were called to clear the court as Drinkeld was remanded in custody.

"The comments were well out of order," said a friend of Drinkeld.

"Lee loves Newcastle and sees them as often as he can, and that's why he wears the strip. It's a lot smarter than the everyday clothes you see some other people wearing.

"I hope he's got the strip on when he comes back to be sentenced."

In recent months we have had the Liberian stamp featuring George Weah and the statue of Gabriel Batistuta at Fiorentina. Now Preston North End bring you their new Tom Finney Stand – complete with an image of the great man picked out on the seats. In an age when it's all too common to honour past heroes by naming an executive toilet after them, it's nice to see a club putting some thought into it.

Real's answer to the teenage rampage – don't get MAD get RID

SPANISH CHAMPIONS Real Madrid have been forced to hold training sessions behind closed doors after players were mobbed by 3,500 schoolchildren at the club's training ground.

Four teenagers were injured and police had to be called in to protect the Real players, who had been forced to lock themselves in the changing rooms to escape the young fans. Real charge fans 200 pesetas (£1) to see their heroes put through their paces in training.

Several players had their cars damaged after the children, many of whom were on holiday for Spain's carnival season, broke through a car park fence. When the players did emerge, defender Rafael Alkorta discovered that an admirer had written "Rafael, I love you" on his windscreen.

"It's sad to say, but you can only control these people with sticks," said Miguel Angel Gonzalez, the former Real goalkeeper who now manages the team's training ground. He confirmed that the next day's training session would be held behind closed

South African defender Mark Fish was one of the stars to emerge from the recent Nations Cup *(see profile, page 46)*. Bafana Bafana fans certainly took to him – many brought dead fish, some stuffed to the gills with South African flags, to wave in his honour.

False economy

ZIMBABWEAN POLICE are investigating claims that local footballers are falsifying their ages to make themselves more attractive to foreign teams.

Two players from Darryn T confessed that they had changed their dates of birth following a report in the *Herald* newspaper that four players, three of whom were due to play for Zimbabwe's Under-23 side against Nigeria in an Olympic qualifier, had given false dates.

"One has said he changed his date of birth to make himself more marketable on the international soccer scene," a police spokesman said.

"The other insisted he changed his age after discovering his grandmother made a mistake on his birth certificate."

Badge Business

VALENCIA

Valencia's crest represents a bizarre case of mistaken identity. Back in medieval times the region of Valencia was part of the kingdom of Catalonia and Aragon – whose traditional colours are yellow and red, hence the stripes. Legend has it that local top boy Saint George (there were obviously no exclusive franchises in those days) saved the nation by slaying a man-eating dragon with wings. The symbol of this said beast became part of local folklore. Unfortunately something got lost in the translation and over the centuries the dragon somehow turned into a bat.

The Basque master

Spain's coach Javier Clemente is nothing if not a realist, as Keir Radnedge discovered in an exclusive interview

JAVIER CLEMENTE is a regular visitor to London. He could not imagine any happier coincidence than bringing his Spanish national team to England for the finals of the European Championship. The World Cup, perhaps. But that is not within the realms of reality and Clemente is nothing if not a realist.

The point about this dapper little Basque with the mischievous eyes is that the man with the top football job in Spain loves the English game.

"I am," he says, "a fan of English football." Then he pauses before adding: "The only one in Spain – I know it. People in Spain do not like English football. They say it is all physical. That there is no finesse, no style. Fans in Spain like clever-clever football. They like players who dribble the ball around in circles, who pass the ball two or three yards at a time.

"But for me, it is not enough to play pretty football. You have to play effective football. When my team play I want to win, to force the other team to make mistakes. To do that you need players with strength and determination and spirit . . . as well as skill."

Clemente knows all about determination. A serious knee injury at the age of 24, when he was being hailed as the most promising Spanish midfield player of his generation, halted his career. Blame lay not so much with the injury – serious as it was – but with the problems created by the attempts to rebuild the knee.

Today's specialist sports surgeons would have put Clemente back on the pitch in a matter of months. But in the mid-1970s techniques were not as advanced. Nor did anyone then think of sending a sportsman halfway round the world to undergo surgery in the United States.

So Clemente spent what should have been his finest years as a player learning the ropes as a coach. Bilbao, with their traditional loyalty to members of the Athletic football family, appointed him to their youth coaching staff. And he set about gaining a thorough education both at home and abroad – in particular, in England.

Clemente says: "When I was youth coach with Bilbao I spent a month at Ipswich when Bobby Robson was the manager there. I watched everything he did – and he did everything! Then, at the end of each day, I asked him: Why did you do this? Why that? He told me. He was very patient with me.

"I remember that with Ipswich he played 4-4-2. It worked well for him and for the team. So when I went back to Bilbao and, in time, became first-team coach, I used 4-4-2 like an English team. Twice I won the league with 4-4-2. Thank you, Mr Robson!"

Not that you will find Spain playing a rigid 4-4-2 at Euro 96 this summer.

Clemente says: "I don't use it now for the national team. I believe that 4-4-2 has served its purpose. The game is always changing and tactics must change. Nowadays I pick my team according to the opposition. I adjust my team selection and my tactics.

"Some people say this is a negative approach but I don't think so. I always want to make the best use of the players I have. I can only do that by considering how the opposition will play and how we can take advantage of their weaknesses.

"Of course, when you do that you cannot tell the world your plans in advance. So I never announce my team two or three days before a match. The day before a game I tell one person the team: Zubi, my captain. The rest of the squad . . . nothing."

'It's not enough to play pretty football. When my team play I want to win. To do that you need players with strength and determination and spirit . . . as well as skill'

Zubi – veteran Andoni Zubizarreta – is, of course, a Basque like Clemente. Spain's manager has happily kept faith in his goalkeeper-captain long after Barcelona turned him out as the scapegoat for their 4-0 thrashing by wonderful Milan in the 1994 Champions Cup Final.

Clemente would argue long into the Spanish night that he has no favourites. That Basque players such as Zubizarreta and Julio Salinas hold their places because they have earned his faith in them.

But Clemente is not a man to stray far from his roots. He says: "When I was coach of Espanyol in Barcelona then we all lived there. But later, when I was with Atletico Madrid, then I lived in Madrid with my wife but our three daughters and our son stayed in Bilbao because of their schools."

Clemente has no illusions about his son emulating his career as a player. He says: "He plays football but for a small team. Not only that but he keeps telling me that Johan Cruyff is his favourite coach – even though his father is manager of the Spanish national team! When I asked him why, he told me: 'Cruyff puts his son in his team . . . but you don't put me in yours.' "

Clemente laughs at his own expense. Just as he laughs at the memory of his time in charge of Atletico under the unpredictably autocratic Jesus Gil. He says: "In the middle of the season the championship table was Real Madrid first and Atletico second. But Gil told me that was not good enough for him and I should go back to Bilbao."

Not that dismissal by Gil affects a coach's reputation. Quite the opposite. Clemente was in honoured company, including Cesar Luis Menotti and Luis Aragones. Within a year of being sacked by Atletico, Clemente was appointed manager of Spain in succession to Vicente Miera in the summer of 1992.

In the 1980s, under Miguel Munoz, Spain had gained a great deal of 'street cred' at national team level. Munoz was forced out in 1988 but neither Luis Suarez nor Miera had tough enough skin to survive the political ferocity which often threatens to engulf La Furia.

Clemente proved different. He owed nothing to either end of the Madrid-Barcelona axis and has switched between using

(cont'd on page 14)

Early days . . . Clemente before injury wrecked his playing career

FACTFILE
Javier Clemente
Born: 12.3.50, in Barakaldo, Vizcaya
Playing career: Barakaldo youth, Athletic Bilbao
Representative honours: Spain youth, Olympic, under-23
Coaching career: Arenas Getxo, Baskonia, Athletic Bilbao youth, nursery team and first team (two championships, one Spanish Cup); 1985-87 Espanyol (UEFA Cup runners-up); 1989-91 Atletico Madrid; Spanish national since July 1992.

Mr Motivator – Clemente makes his point to Serra at the USA World Cup

blocks from either club – or neither – depending on form and results. Similarly, Clemente is quite happily prepared to ignore the clamour for him to include the new wonderboys – Real Madrid's Raul Gonzalez and Barcelona's Ivan De la Pena – in his squad for Euro 96.

He says: "De la Pena is like a matador. He likes to show off. He likes to look good, to do the pretty things I was talking about – that the Spanish fans like. When Barcelona win then he looks good. When Barcelona lose then you don't see him. That's OK. He's a very young player. He has time to learn.

"As for Raul, he is already a very good player. He's strong. He's intelligent. When he gets the ball he is not looking just to score goals himself. You see him looking around – working out the best place to pass the ball to create space or maybe a goal not only for himself but for someone else.

CLEMENTE dances diplomatically around the question of whether he wants Barcelona's Jordi Cruyff ***(right)*** to declare himself for Spain.

"Look," says Clemente, "he has had a very bad knee injury. The question of whether he plays for Spain or Holland does not arise right now."

But when it does? Clemente plays for time again, saying: "But what is his best position? Johan plays him on the left, on the right or between midfield and attack. Well, I have Caminero and Guerrero for that position. Maybe that's not the right place for Jordi but until he settles down to one position how can I tell where I could use him?"

"But whether he will be ready for the European Championship? I doubt it.

"I would prefer to use him – and De la Pena – in our team for the Olympic Games in Atlanta. They will be fresh after the summer holiday and the competition will be good but not at the same level – physically or mentally – as it will be in the European Championship."

Then again, Clemente believes that physical strength will have a significant role to play in Spain's challenge at Euro 96.

He says: "We have problems in Spain because we have had to play our league championship this season with 22 teams. There were a lot of problems last summer with two clubs [Sevilla and Celta de Vigo] who were ordered out of the league because of money problems being brought back in.

"The clubs like having the extra matches for the money but for the national team it's a disaster. It means our league season does not finish until May 26. My players will have only four days' holiday and then just three days' training together before we travel to England.

"Our players have so many matches in the league, the Spanish cup and European club competitions that we have managed to fit in only two matches for the national team to prepare for the finals. Only two! The first match was our 1-0 win against Norway in February, the other is against the Norwegians again in Oslo on April 24.

"I would like more matches, of course. But what can I do? In March, for example, our top clubs are playing 12 matches each in all their competitions. That's why I will need only the strongest of players for the European Championship. They will be SO tired by the start of the finals. Maybe I will have to bring a team of second division players to England . . ."

The air of pessimism is quickly dissolved as Clemente turns his attention to prospects for Euro 96. He believes the quality is high but equally spread, he rates England highly – and he is dreaming of an England-Spain Final.

Not that he underestimates the best of the rest.

Clemente says: "Twelve of the teams can win the European Championship. England and Holland in Group A; all four teams in Group B; Germany, Russia and Italy in Group C; and Portugal, Denmark or Croatia in Group D. For me, of them all, Croatia are fantastic. But their problem is a lack of experience among their players of the big national team occasion.

"Sure, they play for big clubs in Spain, in Germany, in England, in Italy. But going to the finals of a World Cup or a European Championship is something different. The atmosphere, the pressure, the demands are unique."

So England are Clemente's favourites. He says: "You can say: 'If England then why not Holland or France or Italy?' But when England are playing a big match at Wembley, when the players hear the national anthem, you can almost see their chests swelling with pride. England have so many good players and playing at home is such an advantage. More even than people think. In fact, if we both win our groups then Spain can meet England in the Final.

"That would be wonderful for me because I like English football – even though I think it is worse now than it was 10 years ago. Why has so much been changed? Ten years ago I remember being so impressed by Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester United. Not so much now. It's as if some of the skill and commitment has gone out of the game. I don't understand it."

But whatever Spain's results at Euro 96 – win, lose or draw – it won't be too long before Clemente is heading back to London. He likes England. Why? He looks astonished and says simply: "Because I'm a Basque!"

Also, he then admits, his wife likes the shopping . . .

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Tynea

Keir Radnedge on the good, the bad and the ugly moments in Faustino Asprilla's career

NEWCASTLE fans have seen some characters but none with the controversy quotient of Tino Asprilla . . . not even Paul Gascoigne.

Nobody doubts that the Colombian, for whom manager Kevin Keegan paid £6.7million, is one of the world's most explosive forwards. The problem, as UEFA Cup holders Parma have discovered, is that his explosions have not always been on the pitch.

How Asprilla will take to Tyneside is intriguing – the elbowing incident with Manchester City's Keith Curle has already raised concerns. He also once complained that winter in Italy was too cold for the product of a family of nine children from Tulua Valle in Colombia.

As a teenager he was a football sensation. By 22 he was Colombia's Footballer of the Year and starring for Atletico Nacional, the club bankrolled by the Medellin drugs cartel. He was considered a bargain when Parma bought him for what was officially reported as an £800,000 fee. But other monies may have been needed to persuade the cartel to agree to let him go.

Asprilla's early days in Italy were relatively trouble-free, although he crashed four sports cars and was persuaded he would be safer on a moped. Then Parma had to move him to a secluded out-of-town villa after neighbours complained about the day-and-night volume of his salsa music.

But his achievements on the pitch kept the fans happy. In three seasons Asprilla struck an honourable 23 goals in 78 League games, scored the goals which halted Milan's record 58-game unbeaten run, and drew international acclaim in the 1994 World Cup qualifiers. Asprilla, axed from the squad on one occasion for breaking a curfew, returned to score twice in a sensational 5-0 win away to Argentina in Buenos Aires.

But already Asprilla had been attracting the wrong sort of headlines. Early in 1993, visiting his sick mother back in Colombia, Asprilla collected a nasty gash in a mysterious accident. First reports suggested a scuffle over a knife or a fall from a bus or a dive through the windscreen after a dispute with the driver.

Asprilla insisted the injury was caused only when he trod on some glass by a swimming pool. He said: "It couldn't have been a bus. We don't have any public transport in Tulua!" Whatever the cause, the injury was serious enough for Parma coach Nevio Scala to rule him out of the Cup-winners Cup Final at Wembley. Parma beat Antwerp 3-1. Furious, Asprilla demanded a transfer – then thought better of it. Not for the only time.

'Nobody doubts the Colombian is one of the world's most explosive forwards . . . the problem is that his explosions have not always been on the pitch'

By now Asprilla had graduated from star footballer to international personality, complete with paparazzi attention – especially after he was photographed spending his free time in the company of soft-porn film star Petra Scharbach. Asprilla admitted later that he had been naive. The young lady in question merely wanted to enhance her own public persona through a connection with Parma's new hero.

The pressure of playing virtually two years non-stop caught up with Asprilla. His game suffered. Parma were beaten by Arsenal in the 1994 Cup-winners Cup Final in Copenhagen. Then Colombia crashed out of the World Cup finals amid controversy and tragedy. The murder of team-mate Andres Escobar and further subsequent death threats convinced Asprilla to fly back direct to Italy, vowing never to play for his country again.

In due course, he did go home for the new year holiday at the start of 1995 . . . and was arrested on charges of being drunk in possession of illegal firearms. Asprilla was allowed to return to Italy only on condition that he reported regularly to the Colombian consulate. In due course he was given a suspended one-year prison sentence.

With Parma, Asprilla won the UEFA Cup, but simultaneously he fell out with Scala and demanded a transfer. Leeds opened talks in July but when negotiations stalled Asprilla apologised to Parma and returned for pre-season training.

Nor did Asprilla maintain his national team boycott, turning out for Colombia in their goalless draw against England at Wembley.

Asprilla was not impressed by what he saw, saying: "The days when England were the nation to be feared have long gone. They may fancy their chances of winning Euro 96 because they have home advantage – but I doubt it. Apart from maybe Gascoigne, they lack the individual flair and imagination of their nearest rivals."

A charge nobody could ever lay against this most exotic football son of Colombia.

Coming to blows . . . Asprilla confronts City's Curle

mite!

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT ASPRILLA . . .

KEVIN KEEGAN (Newcastle manager): "It won't surprise most people in the game to know that he looks street-wise on a football pitch. I was trying to explain to him what we did in certain situations and he said: 'I know this one – we do this with Colombia.' We build up this thing that training is very different in this country, but there are similarities.

"We did have a laugh, though, when, after a hard morning's physical training without the ball on Monday, he told his interpreter to ask: 'What time do you want me back this afternoon?' In Italy, you see, they train morning and afternoon but we train hard once a day. We'll do enough in our one and a half hours to keep his fitness right for English football.

"In fact, he could be fresher for that.

"He'll pick everything up all right. He's a laid-back lad, watches and says to himself 'that's what I have to do' and he does it. That applied when he made such a great start as a substitute at Middlesbrough. If he had looked bewildered I wouldn't have put him even on the bench but he took things in his stride.

"That's why, despite what everyone else seems to have said, he won't disrupt what's going on here. He's a quality player but when you get into these prices you buy almost the finished article.

"The thing which fascinates me now is how will he bounce off English football . . . and how will we adapt to him? We have two interpreters for him to help him start learning English straightaway. One of them is a girl, who's excellent, but obviously there are certain areas of the club which are difficult for her to enter.

"He's aware of what appeared in the press before he arrived here. He reacted as anyone would react. It makes him feel disappointed that people have picked out all the minuses.

"He's no more difficult than any other player. All players can be difficult at certain times – if you're not playing them or something has gone wrong in their private lives. But, as far as we are concerned, he's been a model pro. He's looked, watched, learned and, despite the change for him, has done things with ease.

"The bad news often seems to outweigh the good in this country. The best way for him to answer is on the field. That's the only thing we're really interested in."

DAVID GINOLA (team-mate – Newcastle): "Some of the fans when we played at West Ham tried to give Tino a tough time but it won't worry him one bit. He has played in Italy so he knows what to expect. It will not be new to him.

"All foreigners get abuse. It is no different in England to any other country. If I go to support a team it's not to boo the opposition. I will applaud skill on both sides. But not everybody is like that.

"It might be jealousy or just the fact that we are a threat. Football is very intense now. But sometimes fans who come to boo end up shaking my hand and saying 'brilliant'. I like that and I am sure it will be the same for Tino."

LES FERDINAND (team-mate – Newcastle): "I've never played with anyone quite like Asprilla. He is unique. Some of the skills he shows are something else. He is the type who will score sensational goals and create chances for others.

"We seem to have hit it off straightaway. The understanding is uncanny considering he doesn't speak much English at the moment. Then, once we get the communication going properly and fine tune a few things I think we can be a really dangerous partnership.

"Certainly he can take some of the pressure to score goals off me.

"He may have arrived just at the right time for the title run-in. Our confidence couldn't be higher. We are like children with a drum. Everyone wants to take it off us but we won't let go – and Tino's presence can only help us hold off the challenges of Manchester United and Liverpool.

NEVIO SCALA (Parma coach): "Asprilla is a wonderful talent. His game is almost all instinctive. But a league championship in Italy is not about individual moments, it is about strategy and discipline. With Asprilla sometimes we got three points or, if he had an off day, we risked getting nothing.

"My responsibility is not to any one player but to the club and our supporters and our sponsors.

"They want us to be getting good results consistently and challenging the top clubs in Italy and in Europe. Now I have Melli and Zola in attack. Sometimes even Stoichkov has had to stay on the bench. Asprilla came next in the queue. I was a player – I understand the frustration that brings.

PRO-FILE

Faustino 'Tino' Hernan ASPRILLA Hinestroza
Born 10.11.69, in Tulua, Colombia
Nickname Pulpa (Octopus)
International caps 17
International goals 4
Trophies: 1991 Colombian League championship with Atletico Nacional; 1991 Colombian Footballer of the Year; 1995 UEFA Cup.
Season-by-season

	Club	Lge (goals)	Cup	Euro
1989	Deportivo Cucuta	15 (7)		
1990	Atletico Nacional	18 (9)		
1991	Atletico Nacional	36 (15)		
1992	Atletico Nacional	7 (1)		
1992-93	Parma	26 (7)	6 (1)	6 (3)
1993-94	Parma	27 (10)	7 (4)	8 (2)
1994-95	Parma	25 (6)	7 (0)	8 (3)
1995-96	Parma	6 (2)		

Ball of confusion

As Europe struggles to come to terms with the full implications of the Bosman ruling, John Kelly and Keir Radnedge examine the early reactions among the clubs

WE TAKE no particular pleasure in the fact that you read it here first. We told you in these columns in the February edition that Europe's top clubs would be free of the three-plus-two rule by the time the quarter-finals of the Champions League, the Cup-winners Cup and the UEFA Cup came around.

The fact that 24 clubs volunteered to stick by the spirit of the past for the rest of term may not be enough to keep the European Commission off UEFA's back.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson insists vehemently that the clubs made their generous offer without any inspiration from Nyon. The European Commission may not see it that way. But then confusion is the name of the game, post-Bosman.

In simple terms, the European Court of Justice declared restrictions on EU citizens from other countries as illegal; it also ruled illegal any transfer fee claims imposed on players moving, out of contract, from one EU country to another.

In the wake of that order, several EU nations are not waiting for the test case which will surely affect domestic transfer regulations: Holland and Germany are ready to follow the long-running French lead and scrap internal transfer restrictions. England, by contrast, is to fight to maintain the internal transfer market intact.

Television and sponsorship cash has a central role to play. In Holland and Germany, for example, where TV income is centrally negotiated and distributed, the federation does have the luxury of being able to syphon off necessary amounts to subsidise the small clubs. In England, TV deals are negotiated league-by-league. The FA has no such financial stranglehold; thus it is imperative for small clubs in England that the transfer fee system be maintained.

Here, the top English clubs – which means the Premiership elite – believe they may be able to run with the fox and hunt with the hounds.

Premier League chief executive Rick Parry says: "Transfer fees paid to smaller clubs should be maintained because they are entitled to compensation for genuine training and development." But modern clubs are businesses. If they can poach a promising player for nothing rather than pay a fee, then they will do so.

One option, discussed at a recent meeting of 10 top European countries in Windsor, was for the introduction of a long-term compensation scheme, which would replace transfers. Under the scheme, the bigger, richer clubs would contribute to a central pool for the upkeep of the smaller, poorer clubs. Fine in theory, but who would run such a scheme? Who would decide on the level of contributions and payments?

Hopes that sport could be classified as a separate entity under European Union law, and therefore not be subject to the freedom of labour movement regulations, are well wide of the mark. "The notion of a blanket exemption for sport is absurd," concludes Parry. Clearly, whether UEFA likes it or not, football is not above the law.

But the big clubs are under just as much threat as the little ones. As the tables on the opposite page show, European champions Ajax are faced with the nightmare prospect of seeing their all-conquering side systematically dismantled by Italian and Spanish clubs, with little by way of recompense to soothe the blow and help with the rebuilding.

Since 1990, Ajax have sold more than 20 odd players for a combined total of almost £33million, a highly-prized source of revenue, and just reward for the outstanding work the Amsterdammers do in developing young players. Louis Van Gaal's current squad is valued at roughly double that amount, but Ajax could lose the bulk of those players for far less money in the new era of post-Bosman football.

Already, the Italians and Spanish have started sniffing about, with Edgar Davids, Michael Reiziger and Patrick Kluivert allegedly as good as Milan players, all on free transfers once they are out of contract. Similarly, Juventus are said to be keen on Finidi George and the De Boer brothers, Frank and Ronald. Internazionale have been linked with Nwankwo Kanu, and Barcelona are believed to be interested in Jari Litmanen, along with Valencia.

While all of this is currently nothing more than informed speculation, the old adage about fires and smoke certainly holds true for European football, and the continent's top clubs are now busy fortifying themselves to fend off attacks from neighbouring countries.

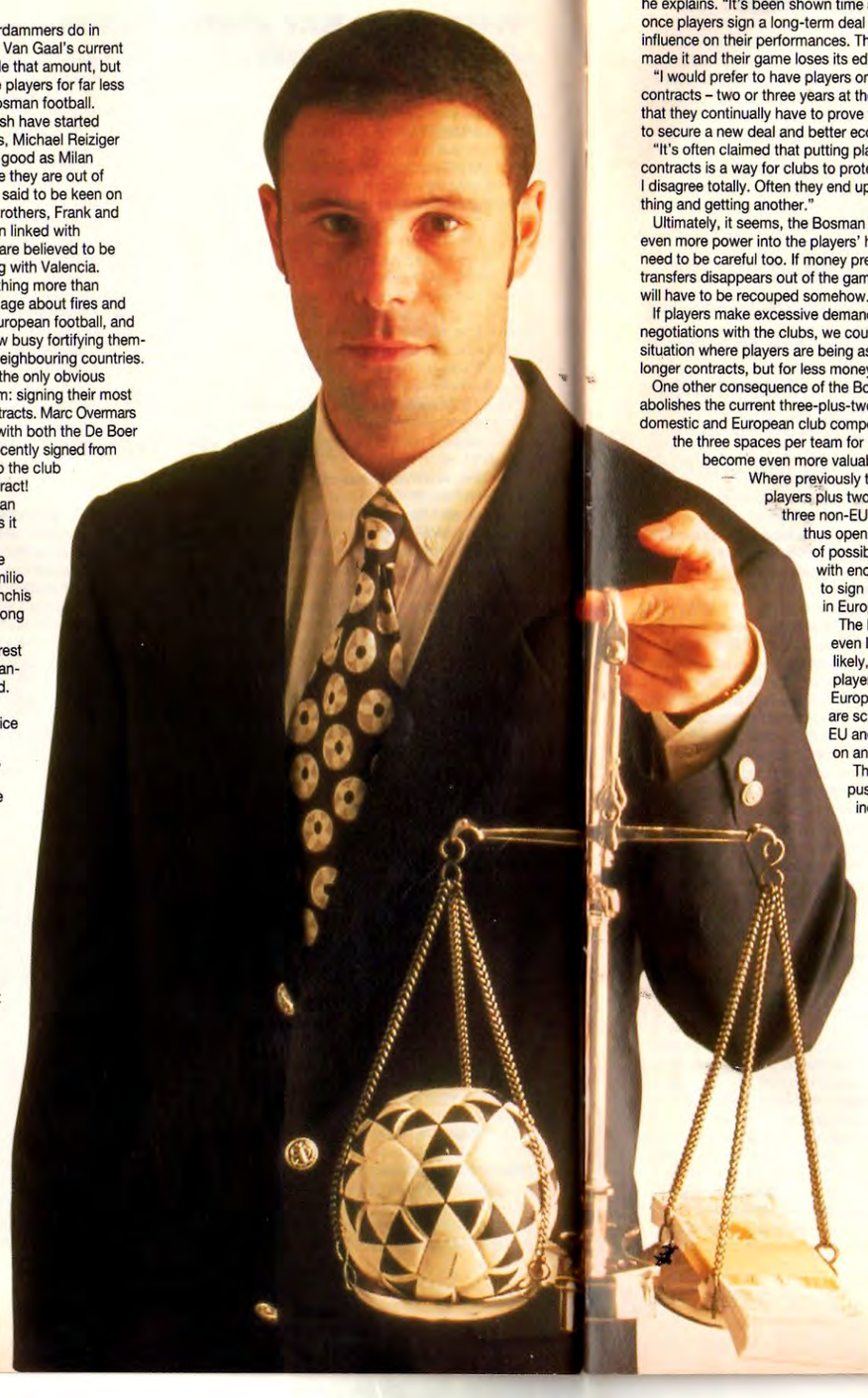
Ajax, for instance, have taken the only obvious protective route available to them: signing their most valuable players to long-term contracts. Marc Overmars has a contract until 2000 along with both the De Boer brothers, and Peter Hoekstra, recently signed from PSV Eindhoven, has been tied to the club until 2002, on a seven-year contract!

But the long-contract option can often bring as many problems as it solves. In the mid-1980s, for instance, Real Madrid signed the so-called 'Vulture Brigade' of Emilio Butragueno, Michel, Manolo Sanchis and Martin Vasquez to decade-long contracts, in the belief that this would, a) discourage Italian interest in their young stars, and b) guarantee success at home and abroad.

While this seemed like an excellent idea in theory, in practice it failed miserably. With the honourable exception of Michel, the players all peaked in their mid-20s, Barcelona won the title four years in a row and Real never looked like winning the Champions Cup, the club's personal Holy Grail. Indeed, the real outcome of former president Ramon Mendoza's policy was to drive the club to the brink of bankruptcy.

And yet, despite having their fingers badly burned, Real are returning to this policy to protect their new young stars, such as Raul. The teenage sensation has just signed a new contract until 2005, guaranteeing him £8million over the next nine years, plus bonuses and a clause that means the club must favourably renegotiate his conditions every three years.

But what if Raul does not develop to his full potential? What if he falls out with the coach or his team-mates and wants to leave the Bernabeu?



Well, there is a get-out clause, but this is also a protective device because any club interested will have to pay a staggering £13m for his signature.

Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff takes a different approach. "I am totally against long-term contracts," he explains. "It's been shown time and time again that once players sign a long-term deal there is a negative influence on their performances. They think they have made it and their game loses its edge and ambition.

"I would prefer to have players on short-term contracts – two or three years at the very most – so that they continually have to prove themselves in order to secure a new deal and better economic terms.

"It's often claimed that putting players on long-term contracts is a way for clubs to protect their investment. I disagree totally. Often they end up investing in one thing and getting another."

Ultimately, it seems, the Bosman ruling will deliver even more power into the players' hands. But, they need to be careful too. If money previously spent on transfers disappears out of the game, the short-fall will have to be recouped somehow.

If players make excessive demands in their negotiations with the clubs, we could end up with a situation where players are being asked to sign longer contracts, but for less money over all.

One other consequence of the Bosman ruling, which abolishes the current three-plus-two regulaton for domestic and European club competitions, is that the three spaces per team for 'foreign players' become even more valuable.

Where previously three non-domestic players plus two applied, now read three non-EU players plus two, thus opening up a new world of possibilities for the clubs with enough financial clout to sign up the best talent in Europe.

The loophole grows even larger if, as seems likely, ALL foreign player restrictions in European club events are scrapped – to put EU and non-EU clubs on an equal footing

The gates have been pushed wide open indeed!

DATES AND DECISIONS

1995

DEC 15: The European Court of Justice delivers its verdict in the Bosman case.

DEC 16: UEFA says Bosman affects only the international transfer within the European Union of players no longer under contract.

DEC 18: All transfer fees could soon be abolished in Germany, says Reinhard Rauball, the former Borussia Dortmund president and a leading sports law expert.

DEC 19: UEFA's competitions will be deemed illegal unless the three-foreigner rule is scrapped immediately, says the EC.

DEC 22: England's Premier League scraps its three-foreigner rule . . . FIFA and UEFA issue a joint statement insisting that UEFA can maintain foreign player restrictions in European cup competitions and that action will be taken to prevent players from border-hopping.

1996

JAN 11: English Premier League officials agree to bring football federations and the EC together to discuss the implications. Social Affairs Commissioner Padraig Flynn confirms that the verdict does not apply to transfers within a country.

JAN 12: Lennart Johansson, president of UEFA, threatens clubs with sanctions should they field more than three foreigners in European club matches.

JAN 16: UEFA, after a meeting with FIFA, insists on keeping the three-foreigner limit for this season "in the interest of continuity and fairness".

JAN 17: EC officials warn UEFA could be fined or taken to court for ignoring the Bosman verdict.

JAN 18: EC spokesman Barbara Nolan warns that all European professional sports must adjust to Bosman.

JAN 19: The EC says FIFA and UEFA have six weeks in which to comply with Bosman.

JAN 20: European Commissioner Karel Van Miert says attempts at negotiation with UEFA are like "talking to a wall".

JAN 26: Spanish clubs tell Johansson that they would rather defy UEFA than the law of the European Union . . . UEFA's Gerhard Aigner accuses the EC of intransigence.

JAN 31: Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Lamberto Cardia says the government will propose a sports exclusion clause to append to the Treaty of Rome.

FEB 1: European Commissioners tell a UEFA delegation they must fall into line. Van Miert says: "We gave UEFA a six-week deadline last month. Time is running out."

FEB 7: The European Commission says players from North Africa, Turkey and former Eastern bloc countries could fall within the scope of the Bosman verdict.

FEB 8: The eight quarter-finalists in this season's Champions League notify the EU they do not want the three-foreigner rule scrapped this season.

FEB 10: The KNVB says the entire Dutch domestic transfer fee system will be scrapped from July 1.

FEB 12: Officials of leading European football nations are split over an appropriate response to the Bosman judgment. The English Premier League's Rick Parry says: "A lot of people feel it's inevitable and we should be looking forward. Others feel there should be a transitional period."

FEB 14: Real Madrid persuade teenager Raul Gonzalez to sign a contract extension until June 2005 worth £8million.

FEB 18: UEFA member delegates, meeting in London, decide to ask their governments for assistance in negotiating with the European Union.

FEB 19: UEFA's executive scraps the three-plus-two rule while acknowledging that clubs still in the three European competitions will observe a gentleman's agreement to the end of the season.

FEB 20: The EC says it is "partly satisfied" with UEFA's decision, but is still concerned by talk of a protectionist strategy regarding "home-grown" players . . . a German study committee is to be set up to consider proposals to scrap the domestic transfer system . . . Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi says he fears that the country's football heritage is at risk from the Bosman ruling and calls on UEFA to start a quota system for talented Italian youngsters.

AJAX AMSTERDAM 1995-96

Player	Contract Expires	Age Then	Current Value	Interested Parties?
Edgar Davids	**June 1996**	23	£3,000,000	Milan
Nwankwo Kanu	June 1996	19	£4,000,000	Internazionale
Michael Reiziger	June 1996	23	£2,000,000	Milan/Rangers/Real Madrid
Sonny Silooy	June 1996	32	free	FC Tirol
Ignacio Tuhuteru	June 1996	22	£500,000	-
Danny Blind	**June 1997**	35	£1,000,000	Aston Villa
Winston Bogarde	June 1997	26	£2,000,000	-
Finidi George	June 1997	26	£4,500,000	Juventus
Patrick Kluivert	June 1997	20	£6,000,000	Milan
Jari Litmanen	June 1997	26	£6,500,000	Barcelona/Valencia
Martin Reuser	June 1997	22	£750,000	-
Arnold Scholten	June 1997	35	£200,000	Den Bosch
Andrei Demtschenko	**June 1998**	21	£500,000	-
Fred Grim	June 1998	32	£100,000	-
Kiki Musampa	June 1998	21	£500,000	-
Dennis Schulp	June 1998	20	£500,000	-
Nordin Wooter	June 1998	21	£1,500,000	-
Marcio Santos	**June 1999**	29	£2,000,000	Brazil
Edwin Van Der Sar	June 1999	28	£2,000,000	Italy/Spain/England
Frank De Boer	**June 2000**	30	£5,500,000	Juventus
Ronald De Boer	June 2000	30	£8,000,000	Juventus
Marc Overmars	June 2000	27	£10,000,000	Arsenal/Manchester Utd
Peter Hoekstra	**June 2002**	29	£5,000,000	-
Total			£66,050,000	

MAIN AJAX DEPARTURES SINCE 1990

Player	To	Fee
1991		
Peter Larsson	IFK Norkopping	free
Richard Witschge	Barcelona	£3.5million
1992		
John Van Loen	Feyenoord	£600,000
Jan Wouters	Bayern Munich	£500,000
John Hansen	OB Odense	£200,000
1993		
Dennis Bergkamp	Internazionale	£7million
Wim Jonk	Internazionale	£3million
Bryan Roy	Foggia	£1million
Alfons Groenendijk	Man City	£300,000
John Van't Schip	Genoa	£1.5million
Marciano Vink	Genoa	£1.5million
Aron Winter	Lazio	£2million
Ron Willems	Grasshopper	£400,000
1994		
Stanley Menzo	PSV Eindhoven	£250,000
Dan Petersen	Monaco	£500,000
Michel Kreek	Padova	£1million
Stefan Petterson	IFK Gothenburg	free
Rob Alflen	retired injured	-
1995		
Clarence Seedorf	Sampdoria	£4.5million
Peter Van Vossen	Istanbulspor	£2million
John Van Den Brom	Istanbulspor	£2million
Tarik Oulida	Sevilla	£1million
Total		£32,750,000

ITALY

Through the Trap door

***Paddy Agnew on the departure from Cagliari of the most successful coach in the history of* calcio**

CAGLIARI coach Giovanni Trapattoni had painful reason to remind himself of two basic ground rules on the precarious profession of soccer coach.

Firstly, you are only as good as your last game and, secondly, if your boss says your position is not at risk, then rest assured you are on the way out.

A series of negative Cagliari results climaxed when the side lost 4-1 away to champions Juventus to thus register an unenviable hat-trick, following previous 4-0 away defeats, by Parma and Lazio.

Inevitably, the defeat prompted speculation about Trapattoni's tenure of the Cagliari job.

However, when the Sardinian club's boss, Massimo Cellino, was asked on the day after the Juventus defeat if he was about to fire Trapattoni, he replied: "On the basis of what? People who circulate certain names [as the new team coach] do so just for a gamble and to beat rival newspapers."

A day later, Trapattoni had 'resigned', telling reporters: "My resignation is the most reasonable solution because I leave with Cagliari still clear of the relegation zone and with easier games coming up . . ."

The 56-year-old went on to say that although nobody had asked him to quit, his leaving was not entirely of his own volition: "I had sensed that something was up and that people within the club didn't want me around any more."

Whether Trapattoni jumped or was pushed – it was probably a bit of both – is of no long-term significance. What is true, however, is that for the first time in 23 years of coaching at the highest level, Trapattoni has failed to see out a season with his club.

As coach to the winners of seven Italian titles (six with Juventus, one with Internazionale), one Champions Cup, three UEFA Cups, one World Club Cup and one Cup-winners Cup, Trapattoni is the most successful Italian coach of the post-war era with a record that might perhaps have entitled him to a longer innings at Cagliari. This was Trapattoni's first season with Cagliari, following his return to Italian football after a less than glorious season with Bayern Munich in Germany.

When Trapattoni arrived in Cagliari last summer, he was greeted not only by enthusiastic fans but also by a season tickets sales promotion campaign which featured his smiling face on the side of Cagliari buses, saying: "Trapattoni, make a dream come true for us."

Perhaps Trapattoni's successor, Bruno Giorgi, was right when he suggested that Cagliari's problems this season might have come from unrealistic expectations regarding a UEFA Cup qualifying place.

Aged 55, Giorgi is no newcomer. Formerly coach to Brescia, Fiorentina, Atalanta, Cosenza, Empoli, Modena, Padova and Vicenza, Giorgi has also found time in a busy career to coach Cagliari, just two seasons ago.

On that occasion, Giorgi did an excellent job, not only ensuring Serie A survival but taking Cagliari all the way to a UEFA Cup semi-final, where they were beaten by Inter at the end of a surprisingly good run which had seen them eliminate Dinamo Bucharest, Trabzonspor, Mechelen and Juventus, no less.

Just to underline the hazards of the coaching profession, however, that good run led only to a parting of the ways with Cagliari when boss Cellino became so openly critical of Giorgi that the coach had little option but to resign.

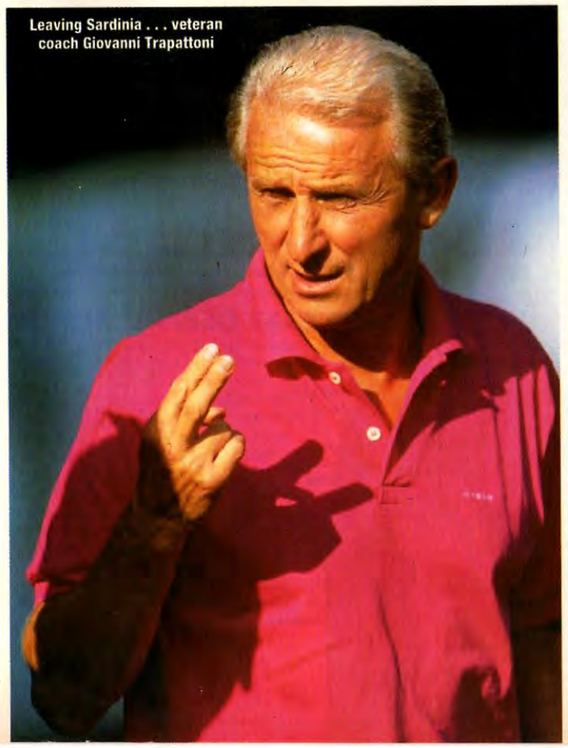
Asked how he felt about returning to a club which had so recently sacked him, Giorgi showed his diplomatic skills, when saying: "Sportsmen have to forgive and forget." Indeed.

One person willing, it seems, to do just that is Silvio Berlusconi, media tycoon, former Prime Minister and owner of leaders Milan. Berlusconi took time off from politics to watch his side defeat Bari 3-2 and was well pleased with what he saw. Asked about the flood of speculation suggesting that Milan's coach Fabio Capello will be on his way to another club (Parma, AS Roma?), Berlusconi virtually offered Capello a new contract when saying: "I think Capello is on the way to winning his fourth title (with Milan) and at that point it will be difficult to give up on the man who has just won the title."

'Whether he jumped or was pushed is of no long-term significance. But for the first time in 23 years of coaching Trapattoni has failed to see out a season with his club'

In the match in question, Milan's African, European and FIFA Player of the Year, Liberian George Weah, had snatched victory from the jaws of a draw when, doing his own kamikaze act as he crashed into the Bari goalkeeper Alberto Fontana to win a race for a high-bouncing, up and under sent through by Marco Simone, he headed home the winner two minutes from time.

For Milan's rivals, that late goal was a sickener. Juventus striker Fabrizio Ravanelli summed up the sense of disappointment within the champions' camp, saying: "If Weah hadn't scored that goal, then we'd still have a glimmer of hope but now I'd say that the title contest is over."



Leaving Sardinia . . . veteran coach Giovanni Trapattoni

That pessimistic view of Milan's triumphal progress is echoed by Claudio Ranieri, coach of Fiorentina, the side that has chased Milan most closely all season: "As for the title, I've always said that only Milan themselves can lose it," argued Ranieri on the day that his team were held to a disappointing 0-0 away draw by Cremonese.

Such are hardly fighting words from the number two side in the land and perhaps show recognition of what many people felt after Fiorentina beat their immediate rivals Parma 1-0 in a clash of joint second-placed sides – that the title contest had lost a deal of interest.

Most commentators had been arguing that of the two challengers, only Parma had the squad strength and battle-hardened experience to convert their challenge into a serious threat.

That defeat by Fiorentina, however, (putting Parma eight points behind Milan) not only may have prematurely ended Parma's challenge but it also did little to help the job prospects of coach Nevio Scala.

The defeat came in a match which had seen Parma dominate the entire second half but fail to create real goal-scoring chances. In the absence of the injured Zola, the Parma attack of Hristo Stoichkov and Alessandro Melli had looked less than irresistible.

Ironically, the Parma defeat by Fiorentina came just 24 hours after their ex-player, Colombian Faustino Asprilla, had marked his debut for Newcastle United by inspiring a comeback in a 2-1 win against Middlesbrough. Parma President Giorgio Pedraneschi was among those who pointed out that Asprilla's peculiar skills might have come in handy for Parma during that second half against Fiorentina.

Pedraneschi appears to believe that Scala's rejection of Asprilla after three seasons with Parma was unjustified, being based more on differences of temperament than tactics.

What is true is that with Zola and Filippo Inzaghi both injured, with Stoichkov not yet fully assimilated and with Alessandro Melli certainly no guaranteed matchwinner, Parma's decision to offload Asprilla appears hasty in the context of a title-challenging season.

While Parma bicker amongst themselves, while Juventus have long since opted to concentrate on the Champions Cup and while Fiorentina keep on protesting their 'innocence', Milan can only rub their hands in glee.

For the time being, there are no dangers on their horizon.

We have written it before but it is worth repeating – Roberto Baggio is no longer an automatic first choice selection for Italy.

Gianfranco Zola is preferred in the Baggio role and position – but he will struggle even to make the 22-player squad for this summer's European Championships in England.

At a recent Italy squad get-together in Rome, Sacchi suggested that just as soon as Baggio was fit and well, he would be called into the national squad, adding, ominously, however: "If Roberto doesn't make it, then we'll do our best to make sure he's not missed."

Question: When a General Election in Italy is called, what is your average political leader's immediate reaction? Answer: He heads to the nearest, most crowded soccer stadium, of course.

On Friday February 16 Italian state President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro called a General Election for April 21, thus unwittingly prompting a run on VIP boxes in grandstands up and down the land.

On the following Sunday, media tycoon and centre-right leader Silvio Berlusconi attended his first match in more than two months when Milan beat Bari. His senior political ally, neo-fascist Gianfranco Fini turned up for Roma's derby with Lazio, a game also attended by Massimo D'Alema, leader of the ex-communist Democratic Left (PDS).

For the months of March and April, VIP boxes are going to be very full.

Question: Name the Italian international who scored a winning goal and got himself sent off within 20 seconds during an important derby?

Answer: Lazio's Giuseppe Signori. The Lazio captain, already booked, was so delighted with his 87th-minute penalty winner against Roma that he ran off the pitch to celebrate in front of the Lazio fans at the Olympic Stadium.

Said a shamefaced Signori afterwards: "The sending-off was justified. I had completely forgotten I was already booked."

Rare moment . . . George Weah training with team-mates at the African Nations Cup

After Africa and Italy . . . Japan

The Far East will be the next stop on George Weah's world tour, as Ricardo Setyon found out at the African Nations Cup

ONLY two matches. So little time and such a great disappointment. Everybody was frustrated and extremely disappointed with George Weah in the African Nations Cup finals.

FIFA's World Footballer of the Year arrived in South Africa, and instantly the other talking points of the Nations Cup were forgotten.

Weah, came, he saw . . . but he did not conquer. Not much football, no goals, nothing. Perhaps the chemistry was wrong: a mixture of disorganised football, squabbles within the squad, parties here and there, and brutish bodyguards.

Weah said before leaving South Africa: "Better forget that!" He had made an earlier telling statement when he told journalists that his biggest desire in South Africa was to meet President Nelson Mandela. He got his wish after Liberia bowed out of the competition on goal difference following a dispirited 2-0 defeat by Zaire.

'My destination is Japan . . . it's something I will definitely do'

Against the Zaireans, Weah was non-existent. He had one or two chances, which he missed with the nonchalance of a beach footballer. In the victory over Gabon, he touched the ball perhaps 10 times.

The four bodyguards, armed with mobile phones, sometimes pushed violently whoever wished to get close to the star, and even decided if there would be interviews or not.

His Italian sponsors were furious; they lost a lot of advertising as Liberia and Weah left a lot sooner than expected. "He definitely could have done more," they said.

After failing to reach the quarter-finals, Weah went to a party in Soweto. Next morning he called the Liberia players to his room to say goodbye. Then he cancelled his flight back to Italy, where he was expected to play with Milan against Udinese.

At that point, I managed to get to him to ask him, on behalf of *WORLD SOCCER*, what he thought of it all.

WORLD SOCCER: Why did you cancel your flight?
GEORGE WEAH: I had one dream: to meet Nelson Mandela.

And in Milan people got angry . . .
I did not know. I just explained it was more important for me to meet Mandela than play one Sunday with my team. I think they understood the importance to me. Mandela is a real, live hero of the African people. It was one of the most important and emotional moments in my life, when I shook his hand. He told me I am an important man for Africa.

Did you expect Liberia to go out so soon?
No, but we had many problems. We met for too short a time before the competition. There is a lot to fix in this team, but we at least won one of our two games. I believed we could do better, but there was a lack of inspiration from all of us. I gave my best, and I think people are wrong in criticising me so hard.

From all you have seen in the Nations Cup, what future do you see for African soccer?
All I have seen was a few games, but one thing is clear: the level is definitely higher than before. Africa has a better level, and no more clear favourites like Ghana or Nigeria, but many other teams able to reach the finals of this and other tournaments. Very soon, maybe sooner than I thought, Europe and South America will not dominate. Watch out, Africa is coming.

Referees were highly criticised. Do African soccer and African referees move ahead at the same pace?
Definitely not. Players and coaches developed better and faster than our referees. It's a pity. But we still have some great referees, here and there.

How does it feel being the world's best, and being criticised when things don't go as you wish?
First I want to say that it is great to be chosen the best, and I believe it is the reward for the hard work I have been doing. But if somebody expects a player to be good always, that is totally wrong. Only Pele can be always good, always perfect. I am proud, I am sure people will now respect Africa more than ever, and nobody is going to take those feelings away from me. And I might even be the best for one or two times more before I quit playing soccer.

Does Japan figure in your future?
Yes. I have had contact with Japanese people. I know that Grampus, where Gary Lineker played, tried to buy me, and even came to Italy to talk with Milan. But Mr Berlusconi did not want to hear about it. I want to go and play in Japan one day. It is something I have decided and which I will definitely do. I can imagine the happiness and enthusiasm of the Japanese supporters in having an African player in their league. Culturally it is something important for me, more than going to play somewhere else. After Italy, I believe my destination is Japan.

SPAIN

Cough if you dare

Atletico Madrid still show the truth of an old Spanish saying, says Graham Turner

CAN Atletico Madrid *really* hang on until May 27 and win the League for the first time since 1977?

Chickens are not being counted – largely because Barcelona, their chief pursuers, won three of their run of four League titles when Real Madrid (twice) and Deportivo generously handed them the silverware on the last day of the season, and this time round they are again refusing to give up the chase.

Thus far, however, Atletico have been performing so well that, as the Spanish saying goes, nobody dares to cough in their faces.

They look the most compact if not the most artistic outfit in a campaign which has proved disappointing. However, a League triumph would represent an achievement which should not be under-valued.

British fans might point a finger (or two) at Blackburn but it is becoming increasingly difficult, in continental Europe, to come across champions who have not engraved their name on the trophy for a couple of decades. By and large, it's the same old song and the same old singers.

In Spain, remember, it's been Real or Barca since Athletic Bilbao last pushed out the barge for a triumphant cruise up the Nervion in 1984.

In playing terms, nothing has changed since *WORLD SOCCER* focused on Raddy Antic's side in January. The question marks over Atletico and other upstart leaders who are not used to setting the pace is whether they have the physical and psychological resources to hold off the more experienced runners in the final straight.

During a crucial eight-day spell in late February, the Mattress-Makers issued a strong warning that they are, indeed, capable of leading from pillow to post.

A week earlier they had suffered their first home defeat of the season when an isolated break by 'Gabi' Moya had given Sevilla a 1-0 win on the Manzaranes cabbage patch. This provoked a week of psychological warfare launched by Barcelona, who were confident of winning in Oviedo and equally confident that, later the same evening, Atletico would lose to the high-flying Budgies of Espanyol.

Barça duly grabbed a scrappy 2-1 win, which at least served to end a club record of no away wins in any competition since October 7. Fans then sat down to watch the Budgies peck holes in the Mattress-Makers. But Atletico were the ones to emerge with flying colours from an authoritative 2-0 win.

The critics waxed lyrical about Serbian midfielder Milinko Pantic – as lyrical as one can get about a man whose name is pronounced pant-itch. His corner produced the opener from Kiko and his free-kick rebounded from a post to give Lubo Penev a simple nod-in. Pantic's contribution to Atletico's campaign at that point could be measured statistically by four goals, 10 shots against the woodwork and 13 assists.

Espanyol's manager, Jose Antonio Camacho, recalled afterwards that his side's previous home defeat had been against Real Madrid on October 24, 1994 and that Real had gone on to win the title. "I have strong reasons for believing that Atletico will do the same," he ventured.

Three days later, Atletico's strength of character faced further scrutiny during the Cup semi-final first leg in Valencia – especially when they were 2-0 down at half-time. They came back to win 5-3, with Itchy-Pants scoring the first two.

The only blot on a memorable night involved Penev (maybe we should cut him down to 'ev' because he missed a pen), who had been given a free transfer by Valencia president Francisco Roig last summer.

Their no-love lost relationship blossomed immediately when they came face-to-face near the press room and Roig, who a month earlier had brutally attacked a fan's boot with his face in Madrid, allegedly did the same to Penev's fist. Both parties ended up in the police station laying mutual charges of assault.

Four days later, Atletico had a home game against Celta. Unexpectedly, they went one down, came back to 2-1, then surrendered another goal before half-time. Absorb-and-counter tactics were wreaking havoc, and Celtic had enough chances to win it. Result: 3-2 to Atletico, with Jose Luis Caminero striking the winner.

In eight days, Antic and his men had had to cope with three different types of opponent and three different situations. They emerged with three wins. There is still time for them to lose the League, but don't bet on it.

That last sentence might have been struck out had Barcelona been playing better football. But any resemblance to the Dream Team of yesteryear is purely accidental. While Atletico were battling against Celta, Cruyff's team beat Betis 1-0 by hoofing high balls toward four Big Boys grouped around the penalty spot.

The encouraging note from that game was the reappearance of winger Angel Guellar, injured in the 35th minute of the first game of the season.

Without him and Jordi Cruyff, Barcelona have looked thin around the flanks. Jordi is still combining his return to fitness with a footballing version of *Around the World in 80 Days*.

His latest trip has been to a Croatian specialist and his departure for Pula without telling anybody angered the club's directors. You might have heard of the Talking Heads but maybe not the Talking Knees. "I will simply do whatever my knee tells me," was Jordi's excuse.

Talking of Croats, Robert Prosinecki has joined Gica Hagi on Cruyff's black list. When asked to explain their repeated absences from squads of 16, Cruyff bluntly responds, "I have other players who are performing better."

European clubs might care to note that both will be free when their contracts expire in June . . .

Inspirational . . . Atletico Madrid's Milinko Pantic

No dash for TV cash

Clubs are in no hurry to sell television rights

JUNE, 2005. That's when wonderboy Raul will be available. He has signed a new contract with Real Madrid worth £8million, and he's still only 18.

Half the Spanish First Division clubs have been offered a similar contract. Albacete, Betis, Celta, Compostela, Deportivo, Gijon, Santander, Sevilla, Tenerife, Valencia and Valladolid have been approached by Mediapro, a Barcelona-based company headed by Johan Cruyff's representative Jaume Roures, and which has a registered office in the same building as the Johan Cruyff Foundation.

The offer is for £5m per season in exchange for total TV rights over six seasons. The world 'total' means all domestic and international matches, even including youth and veteran teams.

Clubs are in no hurry to commit themselves. The market, after all, is not stable enough to justify a long-term deal. Spanish clubs are keen to negotiate a new TV deal to replace the current contract arranged by the Football League, and both Real Madrid and Barcelona have said they are prepared to withdraw from the League unless they are given a bigger slice of the cake.

The other major clubs have declared support and also are demanding a bigger share of the *quiniela* – the state-run football pools.

At the same time, attendances are stabilising, with the First Division showing an occupancy rate of 67.2 per cent. In other words, two out of every three seats have bums on them.

Espanyol, at a time when they have crippling debts and seem condemned to move out of Sarria for the first time in their 95-year history, are perhaps the most spectacular example, beating the previous record of 19,300 set in 1953-54. This is an astonishing recovery after sales of season tickets had slumped to 13,119 in 1994.

Yet at the time when Sarria is showing less concrete than ever before, it could be shut down.

At the end of the 2-0 defeat by Atletico, referee Juan Manuel Brito Arceo suffered the below-the-belt impact of an orange hurled from the terraces. After collapsing in pain, he staggered off with the match ball in his left hand and a couple of non-adidas specimens in the other.

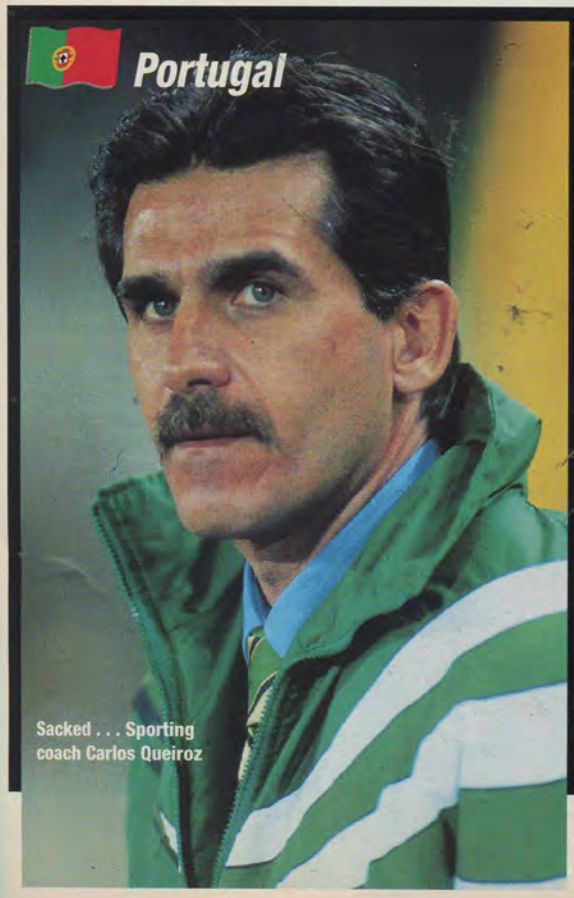
Espanyol's appeal tried to belittle the offensive weapon by calling it a mandarin and, had further appeals been necessary, it doubtless would have become a bonsai satsuma.

A one-match ground closure was ordered, but Espanyol, aghast that it would mean playing the Cup semi-final second leg against Barcelona elsewhere, managed to gain a temporary stay of execution.

The first leg also had ended in controversy involving the referee. A few days earlier Jose Maria Garcia Aranda had been branded "the worst referee in Spain" by Deportivo coach John Toshack and his club president. Espanyol coach Jose Camacho joined the chorus after the penalty decision, which Barça's Popescu converted to score the only goal of the game. "If he gave a penalty like that in a Bayern-Milan match," said Camacho, "UEFA would never let him referee in Europe again."

GRAHAM TURNER

Multi-million deal . . . Real's Raul



Sacked . . . Sporting coach Carlos Queiroz

Chairman for the chop

Sacking of Queiroz could cost Sporting dear

IN DAYS gone by, a game between Benfica and Sporting Lisbon was always a major event.

People would talk incessantly about the match in the days leading up to it. On the day, the Stadium of Light or Alvalade would attract huge crowds. If you did not know someone with influence you could not get a ticket.

And for days afterwards, the match would continue to be the main topic of conversation.

No longer does that apply. When the two giants confronted each other in their recent derby clash, only 20,000 turned up. The result was 0-0, and the football was so poor that a great many of those who went in person rather than watch on TV (all major Portuguese matches are shown live) were perhaps lost to the game for ever.

The upshot was the long-expected dismissal of Sporting's coach, Carlos Queiroz. But the cancellation of his contract will cost the club around £500,000 – and they do not have that sort of money.

Nor do they have the money to pay the £5million they owe Benfica, a debt arising from the transfers of two players, Paulo Sousa and Pacheco. Both UEFA and FIFA have told Sporting to pay up.

Disaster is looming, and calls of "sack the chairman" are being heard more and more. Pedro Santana Lopes is a controversial figure, formerly Secretary of State for Culture and a man given to making quick decisions and then trying to change them.

Four years ago, when his jobs included responsibility for the National Library, he did not pay the fuel bills, so readers had to do their research in overcoats and scarves.

Now people ask: if he did not pay heating bills out of public funds, how can he be expected to pay Sporting's debts out of funds that do not exist?

ALBERTO DA SILVA

GERMANY

Too much quality!

Arthur Rotmil on the selection problems facing Dortmund coach Ottmar Hitzfeld

WHEN THE Bundesliga resumed after the winter break, most clubs anxiously surveyed their injury-hit squads, worrying about who was fit to play. Champions Borussia Dortmund, however, wrestled with a totally different problem.

Team manager Ottmar Hitzfeld was under pressure . . . wondering who to leave out. Now that their strikers, the Swiss Stephane Chapuisat and Karlheinz Riedle, have at last recovered from their cruciate ligament damage, the Dortmunder have a surplus of high-class forwards.

Borussia normally use two strikers; now they must choose from Chapuisat, Riedle, another German international Heiko Herrlich, the Uruguayan Ruben Sosa, Ghana's Ibrahim Tanko, all full internationals, and the outstandingly gifted Lars Ricken.

Hitzfeld can't move any into midfield because he already has too many international class attacking midfielders. And he must also accommodate his latest signing, the international midfielder Jorg Heinrich, who signed from Freiburg for £1.2m in January.

The competition for places may be a healthy development, but it can also lead to frustration and dissatisfaction within the ranks. Many of these players are hoping to take part in the European Championship finals, but they will not get the chance if they languish on the bench.

To make matters worse the conflict between Hitzfeld and his star player, Matthias Sammer, the reigning Footballer of the Year, has not been settled, despite the fact that the national team's libero has extended his contract for another three years.

Borussia's biggest rivals Bayern Munich, on the other hand, were plagued by fitness problems; no fewer than 11 players have been afflicted by a variety of injuries.

The list included key men like Jurgen Klinsmann, Oliver Kahn, Thomas Helmer, Lothar Matthaus and Ciriaco Sforza. Klinsmann did, however, make a miraculously quick recovery from a cartilage problem and was able to play at the re-start. But the Bavarians, leading 1-0 at Hamburg, were undone by two goals in the last five minutes.

At Werder Bremen, threatened with relegation, the main concern is how new team manager, Hans-Jurgen Dorner, will tame the capricious superstar Mario Basler. The highly talented but temperamental international is easily provoked and he demands privileges for himself, which could cause disruption within the squad.

Several former East German coaches failed in the Bundesliga because they were not used to the different mentality among the players.

Dorner, who played 100 times for East Germany, had experience of dealing with highly-paid and highly-strung internationals while he was the assistant to national team manager Berti Vogts. But the situation at a club is vastly different.

Dorner's most important task is without doubt to stave off relegation. His biggest problems are in attack, which produced only 17 goals in the first half of the season. New signing Bruno Labbadia could be the man to improve this miserable total. Dorner will also discard the defensive system of four-in-a-line zonal markers, and use a sweeper.

While most clubs are looking for players who will stay on after this season, Bayern Munich are already in the process of off-loading spare personnel.

International centre-back Thomas Helmer is apparently unsettled by new offers. The Frenchman Jean-Pierre Papin will almost certainly be discarded at the end of the season.

The Bulgarian international striker Emil Kostadinov, on loan from Porto, has not convinced the critics and he, like the other striker, Marcel Witeczek, may also be released. And defensive midfielder Dieter Frey will also be told he can go.

Who will replace some of them will largely depend on the fall-out from the Bosman-ruling – how many out-of-contract players from EU countries will become available on free transfers. One name bandied about is that of Swedish international striker Martin Dahlin from Borussia Monchengladbach, but he can clean up financially if he moves to Italy.

Dahlin wouldn't cost Bayern anything since he would be moving to another foreign club within the EU. Another possible candidate is the Portuguese Joao Pinto, 24, who has extended his contract with Benfica, but has a built-in clause allowing him to move if a foreign club makes a suitably tempting offer.

The outsider

Nick Bidwell profiles the Bundesliga flop who made his international debut last month

THE ONLY German currently playing in Serie A, Oliver Bierhoff of Udinese, could be the surprise choice to partner Jurgen Klinsmann in the 'Nationalmannschaft' frontline at Euro 96.

Six years after winning the last of his 10 caps for the Under 21s, Bierhoff, whose goalscoring exploits in Italy this season – 11 strikes in 22 starts – have impressed many, has convinced German manager Berti Vogts to call him up. He made his full international debut in last month's 2-1 friendly victory over Portugal in Porto.

Bierhoff, 27, has a good chance of making his country's starting line-up in England this summer. Jurgen Klinsmann remains an automatic selection up front, but the name of his attacking sidekick is far from settled.

Since USA 94, Fredi Bobic of Stuttgart, Leverkusen's Ulf Kirsten, Stefan Kuntz of Turkish side Besiktas and Dortmund's Heiko Herrlich have all been used alongside Klinsi. None, however, have entirely convinced. Bierhoff might be the answer.

"Naturally, I'm really excited about breaking into the German national team," said Bierhoff after the Portugal game. "I'm so proud. This has to be the best moment of my career. I'd just like to thank Berti Vogts and my international team-mates for making me feel so welcome.

"For the past few months I have known that Berti Vogts was keeping an eye on me, but I have made a conscious attempt not to let thoughts of international football become an obsession. I have tried to concentrate on doing well for Udinese and scoring the goals to keep us in Serie A.

"I would like to think the door is open for me to go to the European Championships, but I'm aware I must continue to produce the goods on the pitch. There's four months to go before Euro 96 and anything can happen. Many other German strikers will be staking their claim."

Bierhoff is the Bundesliga flop who made a name for himself beyond Germany's borders. As a young professional with Bayer (now KFC) Uerdingen, Hamburg and Borussia Monchengladbach, he managed just 10 goals in 73 top-flight matches. In 1990 Oliver was offloaded by Gladbach to Casino Salzburg.

The Austrian League proved much more to his liking and after 23 strikes for Salzburg, Internazionale stepped in to buy him. Inter promised to loan him to Ascoli for 12 months and then recall him to Milan, but reneged on the deal when Oliver scored only twice as Ascoli were relegated to Serie B.

Instead of appearing regularly at San Siro, Bierhoff was to stay at Ascoli for the next three years, averaging 15 goals a season and earning a move to Udinese last summer.

"Italy has been good to me," says Bierhoff. "Serie A is still the best league in the world and it's great to test yourself against all the wonderful players here; the fans at both Ascoli and Udinese have treated me so well.

"I love the Italian way of life and my salary is excellent."

Bierhoff should know all about the monetary aspects of his chosen career. On the verge of completing a doctorate in economics, he will have no trouble negotiating his next contract. Possibly with Juventus.

PRO-FILE

Oliver Bierhoff
Udinese and Germany
Born: May 1 1968, in Karlsruhe, Germany.
Previous clubs: Bayer (now KFC) Uerdingen, Hamburg, Borussia Monchengladbach, Casino Salzburg, Ascoli.
International debut: February 1996, v Portugal.
International caps: 1.
International goals: 0.

Austria

They used to play on grass

FOOTBALL played in the open on real grass doesn't attract as many fans as in years gone by. But soccer played indoors on artificial turf during the winter break is drawing the crowds in record numbers.

That is the quite astonishing development in Vienna. At the same time as record champions Rapid can barely half-fill their ground and proud FK Austria often play before just 3,000 fans, many other clubs in Austria are also lamenting the empty spaces. Yet, Viennese football indoors is definitely in vogue.

The much publicised and sponsored tournament in the Stadthalle was watched, unbelievably, by 60,000 spectators, as all seven games were practically sold out. Vienna now calls itself the world capital of indoor soccer. Tradition and atmosphere are thought to be the recipe for the unexpected boom.

The event was staged for the 36th time and once again reported record crowds and receipts. The well-organised competition relies in principle on the attraction of the derby between those old rivals Rapid and FK Austria. Their appeal to the fans is so great that the organisers can afford to waive invitations to Milan or Bayern Munich since the locals still fill the arena.

The large pitch, which allows a spacious passing game, has an excellent surface which promotes pace, while technically skilled players can use specially constructed boards to collect rebounds. All this leads to more goals and excitement than is experienced at other tournaments around Europe.

Because the receipts are higher through the absence of expensive foreign teams, it has been possible to raise the win bonuses. A tournament winner can now make £100,000, so that all teams go all out to win. Now it is planned to extend the competition to regional centres and eventually create a national championship.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

Switzerland

Jorge makes his mark

A BADLY depleted Swiss national squad travelled in January under the new team manager Artur Jorge to Dubai in the Middle East.

Jorge certainly put the 22 players through their paces. He may be a slave driver but at least he issues his commands in one language, French, unlike his predecessor, Roy Hodgson, who often started in English and then would lapse into French or German.

The two planned friendly matches against local Arab teams were cancelled because Jorge was above all interested in assessing his charges in physical work-outs. His first match will be against Luxembourg on March 13.

Unfortunately seven foreign-based players were unavailable and this problem will cause the new team chief more headaches in the countdown to Euro 96.

Jorge described the exercise as "very useful" and added that he will shortly travel to Germany, France and England to observe his top players in action.

A big blow to his plans was the refusal of the British authorities to grant defender Marc Hottiger a renewal of his work permit following a move to Everton.

Hottiger, capped 57 times, had a permanent place in the Newcastle team last season and played 38 League matches, but this term, following the arrival of Warren Barton from Wimbledon, he was relegated to the reserves.

The Swiss clubs were preparing for the resumption of the championship on February 25 with indoor tournaments and sessions at training camps.

ARTHUR ROTMIL

A giant among men

Keir Radnedge pays tribute to Helmut Schön, who died last month

HELMUT SCHÖN retired as national manager of West Germany on the eve of the 1980s. That may sound like only a little more than a decade ago, but looking back on the career of the man who has just died, Schön appears a manager from a different age.

Schön's record was, at world level, second to none. Yet he was not, like today's tracksuit tyros, a man barely half a generation ahead of his players in terms of age. Schön was a gentleman, a father figure, a creative tactician and psychologist rather than aggressive motivator.

That his methods brought the rewards they did may make more than a few of his managerial successors pause for thought over the methods that are employed today.

In his free time Schön was happy to stay home and walk his dog – probably one of the world's most famous poodles. The big man and the little dog summed up what some believed was his eccentricity but reflected more accurately a quality which many of his greatest players, remembering him kindly, have preferred to describe as Schön's down-to-earth sensitivity.

To current national coach Berti Vogts, Schön was simply: "the most successful trainer ever – and a man who saw only the good in players and in people in general."

Schön was born in Dresden on September 15, 1915, and learned his football playing in the streets, much to the disgust of his art dealer father, who had little time for a working-class game.

But Schön junior was an outstanding footballer. He earned 16 caps – collecting 18 goals – as an inside forward during an international career that began in 1937 and ended, prematurely because of the wartime interruption, four years later. He took up coaching in 1945, moved to Berlin to play briefly for Hertha, and was appointed national manager of the briefly independent Saar Republic.

In 1953 he managed the Saar, in the World Cup qualifiers, against prospective Cup-winners West Germany.

Schön was fortunate as well as talented. His boss in the Saar, Hermann Neuberger, soon had his feet firmly on the ladder of political power in German football and Schön followed him into the mainstream.

He became No 2 to the great Sepp Herberger in 1955 and took over as national manager on Herberger's retirement in 1964 – thus setting a pattern for succession from within which the Germans have broken only once . . . when they appointed one of Schön's own proteges, Franz Beckenbauer, in 1984.

The climax of his career was undoubtedly West Germany's 2-1 victory over Holland in the 1974 World Cup Final in Munich. But his overall record included the attainment of World Cup runners-up spot in 1966 and third place in 1970. In the European Championship Schön's West Germany were winners in 1972 and runners-up in 1976. His team recorded 87 victories, 31 draws and just 21 defeats and legendary players who blossomed under Schön included Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller, Wolfgang Overath, Jupp Heynckes, Uli Hoeness, Paul Breitner and Sepp Maier.

Beckenbauer, Schön's World Cup-winning captain and partner in 1974, said: "He was an extraordinary man. He respected everyone, he was friendly to everyone. He created such an atmosphere in the national team that every player enjoyed the experience."

Can today's players all say the same?

Hands-on coach . . . Schön with Franz Beckenbauer after the 1974 World Cup Final

FRANCE

Forwards to the fore

Andre Duclos on the home-based attackers in form and, right, Nick Bidwell profiles PSG's Youri Djorkaeff

We do seem to be producing talented forwards at the moment. The latest to attract attention and praise is Pierre-Yves Andre of unfashionable Rennes.

You wonder how long they can keep him; then you remember that when he left his little local team, Lannion, he turned down a number of bigger clubs because he wanted to stay in his native Britanny. Who says there is no sentiment left in soccer, Bosman or no Bosman?

Andre is 22 and being praised for his opportunism around the goal, his powerful left foot, his forceful right, his pace, his ability to chest the ball down and volley for goal, his excellent timing and apparent ability to hang in the air for headers.

All he needs to do, says Yvan Le Quere, his former manager at Lannion, is to improve his play when he does not have the ball, and to think quickly when he's in tight spaces.

Rennes? He has family there, says Andre, especially an uncle. But he admits that he was getting weary. "I was tired in mind and body.

"There were three stages. The time when I played just for the sake of playing. The time when I played to win, accepting everything, even losing at times, and the last stage, now, as a professional, when we must win at any price."

At first, he said, he was constantly driving home to Lannion, to see his friends and family. "And then the 150 kilometres began to tire me. I had no more time for that."

That's professionalism, *mon fils.*

An older striker who has come into recent form is Bordeaux's Didier Thulot. He is nearly 10 years older than Andre but he has started scoring again, after a very sad start to the season. A car accident last August put him out of action for months, but he is now fully rehabilitated, and he is in amongst the goals.

He made his League debut for Toulon at 20, as long ago as September 1984. Since then he's had club after club: Niort, with whom he found himself in the Second Division, Saint Etienne, where goals were scarce, Martigues, where he knocked in 26 in a couple of seasons, and from the present season, Bordeaux, three goals in his first eight games.

Eric Cantona seems even less likely than David Ginola to regain his place in the international team, whether or not he gets picked for the national squad for the European Championship.

On recent form, the Manchester United star could not possibly be preferred to the brilliant midfield couple of Zinedane Zidane and Youri Djorkaeff *(see profile, right)*.

Against Portugal, admittedly a weakened Portugal without the likes of Paulo Sousa and Luis Figo, they were outstanding. Zidane had a magnificent game, being involved in all three goals. And it was only his ninth cap.

He has been a revelation this season for France, and has wholly justified Aime Jacquet's policy of pairing him with Youri Djorkaeff.

Vincent Guerin, everybody's 1995 player of the year, who was not fully fit, did not do much in that game, and, by prior arrangement, gave way to the more attacking Pedros at half-time, was full of praise. "They are intelligent players, and do not abuse their abilities. They use them to the benefit of their team."

They surely do. At 23, Zidane has given this team a new dimension.

Another to praise the pair of them is Torino's Jocelyn Angloma, doing so well in Italy as a driving midfielder, but still used by France as an adventurous full-back.

"It's true that in these last months we have suffered from a lack of effectiveness," he says. "We had the chances, but not always the men to exploit them. In two spells and three moves and not many more matches, Zizou and Youri have solved the problem. It's great."

Guerin praises the effect the couple have had on the team as a whole, stressing that it is now finding new themes.

Cantona, eat your heart out! Ginola, compose your soul in peace!

"Time is working in their favour," said Guerin. "At present, their association might seem artificial, because they have not played long together. They act on instinct, but they understand one another, and know where to find each other."

Goalkeeper Bernard Lama is another fan, not least because, as he says, the two are always ready to listen to advice.

As for Jacquet, how the wheel of fortune has turned! From whipping boy, he has suddenly become a kind of hero. Long may it last; and preferably well into the coming European Championship. In which, by the way, our defence, on the basis of the Portuguese game, will have to do some tightening up. One does not live by attackers alone; more's the pity.

Belgium

Club Brugge on course

BARRING unaccountable mishaps, the title looks to be heading the way of Club Brugge for the first time in four years.

Hugo Broos' team went five points clear at the top after their 2-1 victory over the champions Anderlecht in front of a full house in the Olympic Stadium.

"Had we lost, it wouldn't have been the end, but it would have hurt us badly," said the captain Franky Van der Elst.

Brugge had gone into the season's most important fixture without international defender Dirk Medved, who had been struck down by hepatitis. However, the country's leading scorer, the Croatian Mario Stanic, was able to play.

Anderlecht, for whom a win would have been enough to take over at the top, went ahead through a 12th-minute penalty from Gilles De Bilde. And it was not until well into the second half that midfielders Lorenzo Staelens and Sven Vermant came up with the goals that sent the majority of the crowd into raptures. None more so, it would seem, than the club's most famous supporter, prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, who said: "The champagne is in the fridge but it's been there for three years, so let's be cautious."

With Lierse losing ground, it is now a two-horse race for the title.

However, if they are going to regain the title, Brugge will have to do it the hard way, after losing both Medved and Australian sweeper Paul Okon for the rest of the season. Okon, voted Belgium's 1995 Player of the Year, has damaged knee ligaments, which has put paid, for the time being at least, to his chances of a move to either Eindhoven or Lazio.

On the international front, national team manager Paul Van Himst was denied the chance to award any new caps by the postponement, because of icy conditions, of the game with Holland due to take place in Eindhoven. His chance should come over the coming weeks. Belgium take on France on March 27 and April 27. Both games will be played in the King Baudoin Stadium in Brussels.

NICHOLAS HARLING

Long lay-off . . . Brugge's Paul Okon is out until the season's end

The Parisien hitman

MEET Youri Djorkaeff, the cultured Paris Saint Germain attacker who is making a name for himself by keeping Eric Cantona out of the French national team.

Now that Cantona is back in action following his eight-month ban, the Gallic footballing media is awash with speculation about his chances of an international recall.

There are, however, two snags. Cantona's form has not been spectacular, and national coach Aime Jacquet seems decidedly unwilling to make space for Eric at in-form Djorkaeff's expense.

"People have to realise we have managed without Cantona for a long while and in that time, the team has come on very well," says Jacquet. "New boys like Djorkaeff, Zidane, Karembeu and Dugarry have done well and deserve to stay in the side.

"I feel a moral obligation to keep faith with the players who toiled to take us to the European Championship finals.

"I do not want anyone to think, though, that Cantona does not figure in my plans. He is a class player, the man I selected to be my first national team captain, and I have not forgotten him.

"My coaching team and myself will continue to monitor Eric's performances for Manchester United and we will see what the future brings."

The support for Djorkaeff, recently linked with a move to England, to Arsenal, is not surprising. After all, his eye for goal effectively kept Jacquet in his job when the vultures were gathering last year.

For much of their Euro 96 qualifying campaign, a shortage of firepower had threatened to scupper French hopes. But Djorkaeff's five goals in his country's last four group matches kept France on course for the Euro finals and spared Jacquet from the sack.

With a brilliant free-kick equaliser five minutes from the end of the 1-1 home draw with Poland, two goals against Azerbaijan and others in the victories over Romania and Israel, Djorkaeff took on the role of national team lifesaver.

"There's so much competition for places up front for France," says Djorkaeff. "Cantona, Ginola, Loko, Papin, Ouedec, Pouget and Maurice will be looking to appear at Euro 96. But I have fought hard for a spot in the starting line-up and won't give it up lightly.

"Of course, I know I can't sit back, but I like to think I have earned Aime Jacquet's respect. I was France's top scorer in the qualifiers and I believe he appreciates the way I go about my job.

"Provided I don't become complacent, I'm optimistic of staying in the French side.

"On occasion during the qualifiers, we struggled. But in the end we got our act together and booked our ticket to England with a certain amount of style.

"I'm proud to be part of the set-up and to have the coach's confidence."

At 28, Djorkaeff is playing the best football of his life, impressing all with his elegance on the ball and ice-cool finishing for both club and country. Yet he has not always been the subject of glowing reports.

Although he has long been regarded as one of the most gifted players of his generation, he also has had to field many a brickbat concerning his lack of application and physical presence.

Only since his move last summer from Monaco to Paris has his game developed the sort of consistency required by any would-be international star. At last his talents are being exploited to the full.

'We have managed without Cantona for a long while and in that time, the team has come on very well' – Aime Jacquet

"My transfer was a big step forward in my career, the best thing that could have happened to me," he declares.

"I spent nearly five wonderful years at Monaco, but PSG are a much bigger club, probably one of the top five or six outfits in Europe, and I felt I would be bound to improve as a Parisian player.

"Being a member of France's number one side has boosted my self-confidence and I'm more likely to be picked for international duty if I'm playing for a side at the top of the table."

Djorkaeff, who is of Armenian-Polish stock, comes from a footballing family.

Brother Micha turns out for Ales in the French Second Division, while father Jean had a highly-rewarding professional career with Lyon, Marseille and PSG, as well as appearing 47 times for France.

"There isn't much common ground between our playing styles," explains Djorkaeff senior.

"Although I started as a right-winger, for most of my career I was a solid, unspectacular full-back. Youri is an instinctive footballer, a very skilful player who makes things happen."

Jean Djorkaeff was ever-present in the French team which finished bottom of their first-round group at the 1966 World Cup. Some 30 years later, Youri is hoping for a considerably better outcome this summer.

"Four years ago, France expected success at Euro 92 in Sweden, but didn't make it to the semis," he says. "This time, our approach will be more low-key, more humble.

"We will be up for the challenge. There's no outstanding team in Europe at the moment and we feel we can be a match for anyone."

PRO-FILE
YOURI DJORKAEFF
PARIS SAINT GERMAIN & FRANCE
Born March 3 1968
Previous clubs Grenoble, Strasbourg, Monaco
International debut v Israel, October 13 1993 (lost 3-2)
International caps 14
International goals 10
Honours none

UNITED KINGDOM

World class, but not club class

England

John Kelly on the World Cup veterans denied the chance to play in the Premiership

LAST MONTH we reported on the further influx of foreign players moving to FA Premiership clubs, and the consequential benefit to both the English game and the players within it. Since then, however, the hoary old issue of work permits – or the lack of them – has reared its ugly head once more and muddied the waters still further.

Two overseas internationals, Romania's Ilie Dumitrescu and Switzerland's Marc Hottiger, were due to move from one FA Premiership club to another, while Brazil's Branco had been lined up by Middlesbrough to shore up a weak defence and provide protection and companionship for Juninho.

Now, Dumitrescu, who has agreed a £1.5million move from Tottenham to West Ham, and Marc Hottiger, who will join Everton from Newcastle for £700,000, have both been denied the all-important work permit because they have not played in 75 per cent of their respective clubs' matches. Similarly, Branco, a World Cup winner in 1994, has been refused a work permit because he has not played in 75 per cent of Brazil's games over the last two seasons.

Professional Footballers' Association chief Gordon Taylor is aware that he and his organisation have "been cast in the role of the Big Bad Wolf" because of the PFA's opposition to these transfers, but there is still hope. Education and Employment Minister Cheryl Gillan has summoned representatives of the PFA, the Premier League, the Football Association and the Football League to a meeting to review work permit rules, which plainly are not working fairly at present. Indeed, Britain is the only European Union country where a new work permit is required if an individual changes his job, or club in this case, during the course of their permit's life.

While Taylor has a duty to protect the interests of English professionals, he also has a duty to protect his members, who include both Dumitrescu and Hottiger. Both men are clearly established internationals – both should feature at Euro 96 – and although they did not play in 75 per cent of their clubs' matches last season, that is precisely why they want to move, so they can play regular first-team football in the future.

Taylor was at least honest enough to admit: "It is an anomaly that they are world class but not club class," surely one of the great understatements of the season.

In Branco's case, Middlesbrough have received assurances from the Brazilian FA that they consider the 31-year-old defender an established international, and that most of their over-23 players were not considered for the Copa America or the pre-Olympic qualifiers, hence explaining Branco's absence from 75 per cent of Brazil's recent games.

Ultimately, of course, the losers will be West Ham, Everton and Middlesbrough, who are being denied the services of top-class players, at a time when they desperately need reinforcements, due to nothing more than red tape.

"Ilie should be allowed to play for us now," commented West Ham manager Harry Redknapp. "It's got to be good for our game if some of the best players in the world want to come here. I thoroughly enjoyed watching Ruud Gullit play for Chelsea against us.

"If foreign coaches want to come that's fine by me too, as long as they are better than us. Why should we have jobs just because we are English?" Why, indeed.

The FA has come in for some criticism recently, too, over its attempts to add a bit of glamour to the FA Cup draw, which in previous years has been a glum affair with the old velvet bag the only glamorous item on show.

While this is, in itself, a reasonable idea, the whole thing has been wrecked by the weather and the police's insistence that 10 days notice must be given before any game can be replayed. Consequently, the draw for the fifth round was reduced to a shambles, with as many 'eithers' and 'ors' as there were teams left in the competition!

The FA should really have delayed the draws for the fifth and sixth rounds, but having made the decision to turn the draws into events in themselves, it had little option but to press ahead, regardless of the fact that the worst winter weather for 33 years was playing merry hell with their schedule.

Of the Cup ties that were played few provided shocks, apart from Port Vale's deserved 2-1 defeat of holders Everton in a fourth round replay. Aston Villa had an easy win at Ipswich, United controversially beat City – with the help of a suspect penalty – in the Manchester derby, and Wimbledon and Southampton both survived to fight again, against Huddersfield and Swindon respectively, in the fifth round. Liverpool beat Shrewsbury at a canter in a delayed fourth round tie, but Nottingham Forest's match with Tottenham had to be abandoned after 15 minutes when the City Ground was engulfed by a snow storm.

Little change in the Premiership itself, with Newcastle still out in front of Manchester United and Liverpool. Faustino Asprilla's arrival has given Kevin Keegan the sort of strength in depth he needs to ensure a sustained challenge for the title, and the Colombian's first outing in black and white stripes produced a fine display at Middlesbrough, where he set up one of the goals in a 2-1 victory.

At the bottom, Bolton are still well adrift of safety, and QPR are yet to show any signs of hauling themselves out of danger. Manchester City and Coventry, the two clubs immediately above them, have improved recently, but the alarm bells must be ringing at the Riverside Stadium by now.

Middlesbrough have lost eight consecutive Premiership games, and are in danger of sliding into the relegation battle. Coincidentally, Boro's slump has coincided with Juninho's arrival, though the under-performing Brazilian can hardly be blamed entirely for the club's malaise.

Suddenly, the England job must look more and more appealing to manager Bryan Robson with each Saturday that passes.

Foreign body . . . Dumitrescu in training with West Ham

Northern Ireland

Crusaders on course

LAST SEASON'S champions Crusaders are bidding to become the first winners of the new Premier League. A run of seven wins and only one defeat has put the club from the Shore Road into a poll position with less than a third of the season to run.

Since mid-January Crusaders have played two Cup Finals. Beaten 3-0 by Glenavon in the County Antrim Shield, they bounced back a fortnight later to defeat Linfield in the final of the Gold Cup. The victory for Glenavon was a boost for Nigel Best's side, who lifted their first trophy for four years. The bad news is that the Lurgan club has faltered in the League race.

At the bottom of the Premier League are Nigel Best's former club, Bangor. The seaside club face a daunting task in trying to retain their Premier League place and rebuild a team on a severely limited budget.

Northern Ireland have arranged three friendly games in Belfast against Norway (March 27), Sweden (April 24) and Germany (May 29). Germany are, of course, favourites to win their World Cup qualifying group when they will again meet Northern Ireland.

ROY KITSON

Wales

No shocks in Cup

THERE were no real shocks in the quarter-finals of the Welsh Cup.

Favourites Barry Town scraped past Second Division Oswestry Town, winning 2-0 thanks to two late goals. They now meet Cwymbran Town, who comfortably saw off CPD Porthmadog.

The other semi-final will be between Inter Cardiff, who overcame fellow League of Wales club Ebbw Vale, and mid-Wales outfit Llansantffraid FC, who beat Pontypridd Town 2-1.

In the League, Barry Town still lead despite the weather restricting their games in 1996. Their challengers, meanwhile, have been dropping points. Fflint Town United, for so long in second spot, lost at Bangor City in a seven-goal thriller, and then dropped into third place after a 1-0 defeat at Ebbw Vale. Conwy United's fine 3-0 win at Afan Lido moved them into second spot.

At the other end Llanelli remain bottom despite playing some excellent football. Last season's runners-up and UEFA Cup representatives Afan Lido have slumped badly and lie in the second relegation place.

Rhyl have been the latest club to hit financial troubles with the club stated to be preparing for Second Division football next season. This fuels the belief that they may decide to resign at the end of the season.

Bobby Gould looks set to appoint Tom and Ernie Walley as Under-21 managers in succession to Brian Flynn.

MEL AP IOR THOMAS

Scotland

It's a two-horse race

Celtic are at last threatening to end Rangers' domination

FOLLOWING years of supremacy, when they have often clinched the league championship with weeks to spare, Rangers currently find themselves in the uncharted territory of a two-horse race as city rivals Celtic mount their first genuine challenge for some time.

Surprisingly, no one at Ibrox is complaining. Most of the comments from the Rangers camp are of the opinion that the threat to their domination is 'good for the game'.

Celtic's challenge is long awaited and has certainly added some much needed spice to a championship campaign which has rarely, in the recent past, elicited a great deal of interest.

The Parkhead club's revival has been spearheaded by the scoring exploits of Dutch striker Pierre van Hooijdonk, although the tall Dutchman created a mini-sensation when he apparently made derogatory remarks about alleged sectarian transfer policies at Rangers, and questioned the tactical awareness of Scottish sides in general.

Van Hooijdonk insisted, quite forcefully, that certain of his remarks had been taken out of context. The strength of his language as he berated some of the interpretations of the article proved, if nothing else, that he has obtained a firm grip of dressing-room vernacular!

With German international Andreas Thom providing support up front, and both John Collins and Paul McStay performing superbly in midfield, Celtic look as well equipped as ever to pursue championship aspirations. However, they remain the 'chasing' team and the eventual resting place of the league flag could well depend on the final Old Firm derby of the season, scheduled for Ibrox on March 12.

The Scottish Cup reached the quarter-final stage without any major shocks, although recognition must be afforded to Caledonian Thistle. They only joined the League in 1994 but battled their way into the last eight of the tournament, where they thought they had been rewarded with a home tie against Rangers on March 9.

They had hoped to play the tie at their compact Telford Street Park ground, but the SFA has told the club to switch the tie to Dundee United's Tannadice Park on safety grounds.

Thistle will be heartened by the performance of Clyde against the Glasgow giants in the fourth round. Inspired by veteran striker Charlie Nicholas, Clyde led Rangers 1-0 before succumbing to a late four-goal burst from the Ibrox men.

The Scottish side has now confirmed its preparations for Euro 96. Craig Brown's men will face Australia at Hampden in March, Denmark in Copenhagen in April,<None> with a final warm up in May against the United States in New York.

ALAN FAIRLEY

Leading the charge . . . Celtic's Van Hooijdonk

next month

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MAY ISSUE ON SALE ON APRIL 5

Holland

Ajax back on track

AMAZING what snow and ice can do for football. Certainly not on the playing side, but it does give people a little more time to consider ideas and plans. And with fewer games being played, there is more publicity about these points.

This has certainly been the case in Holland, where Ajax admit they cannot play as well on hard pitches. It is five years since the last real winter in Holland, so their young players know virtually nothing about what to do in these conditions.

Until recently, PSV have been taking advantage of Ajax's wretched start to the year, at one point drawing level on points. But now star striker Ronaldo has been ruled out for the rest of the season, and on the same day that PSV were held 0-0 by Feyenoord, Ajax regained a two-point lead by hammering Heerenveen 6-2.

Feyenoord chief coach Arie Haan, meanwhile, has been slapped on the wrists by the Dutch FA for sending former Dutch internationals, Regi Blinker and Rob Witschge, down to the club's 'B' selection, which in English is the second team . . . Both are back in the 'A' selection, but whether they are selected for the first team remains the perogative of the chief coach.

The Dutch FA have also asked top referees to look into recruiting new referees from the ranks of professional footballers. And more ex-professionals are saying they would like to become referees. Nothing is perfect in football, but this idea sounds good.

On the playing front, perhaps the biggest, and in many ways, the most disappointing news is that while his international colleagues are thinking ahead to Euro 96, Marc Overmars, the Ajax and Holland left-winger, is not. He is spending every day working on getting his left knee back to a good enough condition to see him in an Ajax – and Holland – shirt next season.

Overmars could have gone to the USfor treatment from a specialist who has worked on top stars such as Michael Laudrup. But although given permission by Ajax to go west, Overmars decided to play it cool. He had an operation on his damaged left knee in Holland and is now working on daily sessions at the Dutch FA headquarters in Zeist.

The surgeon apart, Overmars is now in the hands of three physiotherapists, who are carefully planning his comeback.

Another Ajax ace, Patrick Kluivert, is due to stand trial for causing death by dangerous driving on May 1. If found guilty, Kluivert faces a prison sentence – and would also miss Euro 96.

ERIC NICHOLLS

Out for the season . . . PSV's Ronaldo

Luxembourg

THE TRANSFER saga of Avenir Beggen's Frank Deville finally ended when the player signed for Union Berlin.

The international defender had been expected to sign for Fortuna Koln, but instead signed a two-year deal with Fortuna's German Second Division rivals from Berlin.

Paul Philipp took his national team to play a friendly in Morocco, and lost 2-0. Philipp was pleased with the performance, but not with the Moroccan referee.

The championship resumed with CS Grevenmacher three points ahead of champions Jeunesse Esch, with Union and F91 Dudelange in third and fourth place respectively.

TIM BRICE

Republic of Ireland

First round to Mick

Planning ahead . . . new boss McCarthy

MICK McCARTHY has won his first battle with the FAI. McCarthy's former Millwall assistant Ian Evans has now been confirmed as the new manager's assistant.

Jack Charlton, who worked without a contract, ruled the roost in his dealings with FAI officials. But Mick has only a two-year contract with the FAI and it had been suggested that he would not have as much influence as his predecessor.

It was no secret that some FAI officials wanted Kenny Dalglish to replace Jack Charlton. The day after McCarthy's appointment, FAI President Louis Kilcoyne admitted on local radio that McCarthy was not his first choice!

The row over the comments from Kilcoyne came after the Association had been rocked by a series of resignations and allegations that World Cup tickets were sold to a London-based ticket tout. Chief executive Sean Connolly, accountant Michael Morris and coach Joe McGrath all resigned.

McCarthy will certainly get to know his squad before the end of the season. His first game in charge will be against Russia at Lansdowne Road on March 27. Then there is an away game against the Czech Republic on April 24. Portugal are due in Dublin on May 29 and there will be games against Croatia (Dublin, June 2) and Holland (Rotterdam, June 5) before three games in the US Cup in June.

McCarthy says he will include all the players from Jack Charlton's last game in his first squad. One of the biggest criticisms of the Charlton era was the lack of interest by both Jack and his assistant Maurice Setters in the domestic game. McCarthy, who signed players from the FAI National League when he was manager of Millwall, intends to rectify this matter by training with Irish clubs himself. His first session was with Dublin club Shelbourne.

A crowd of only 16,500 turned up for Jack's debut, a 1-0 defeat by Wales in March 1986, but we should see a bigger attendance for Mick's first game. The FAI has reduced prices for the Russia game and tickets will include a voucher for a free video of the Charlton years.

With the Irish Rugby Union committed to moving to the proposed new stadium on the site of the old Phoenix Park racecourse, the FAI will have to follow suit. The FAI has a contract to use Lansdowne Road for home games until 2001.

The meeting of last year's finalists Derry City and Shelbourne at The Brandywell is the big game in the quarter-finals of this year's FAI Harp Lager Cup. Ties will be played on March 10.

Cork City have been saved. The club that started the season at Bishopstown were put into liquidation in January. The new owners are operating out of Turner's Cross, the base for so many Cork teams in the past.

Bohemians plan big improvements at Dalymount Park following their £100,000 grant from the National Lottery.

Meanwhile talk of Wimbledon moving to Dublin just won't go away. The latest rumour is that the domestic League will switch to a summer season, which would give The Dons the freedom of Dublin during the winter months.

Dermot Keely has resigned as manager of reigning Premier Division champions Dundalk. Lack of cash has hampered Keely at the County Louth club. Denis Clarke is the caretaker boss of struggling Galway United. And John Cleary has quit as manager of cash-starved First Division Longford Town.

SEAN CREEDON

Turkey

Spots before the eyes

Trabzonspor fail to make the last four of the Cup

TEN penalty kicks were awarded in the quarter-finals of the Turkish Cup, which ended with Fenerbahce, Galatasaray, Samsunspor and Gaziantepspor going through to the last four.

The big surprise was Trabzonspor's defeat by Samsunspor, who lost at home by the only goal but won 2-1 in the second leg. Sinan's penalty in the last minute ensured victory.

Fenerbahce missed two penalties and Genclerbirligi one in their first match, drawn 1-1. Then both sides scored from the spot in the return leg, which Fenerbahce won 2-1.

Besiktas forced a goalless draw away to Galatasaray, then lost 2-1 at home after Ertugrul had scored from open play and missed from the spot.

In the remaining tie, Metin scored a penalty in each match as Gaziantep beat Ankaragucu 1-0 and 2-1. Kalinga scored for the Ankara club . . . from a penalty.

The League title now seems likely to be won by Trabzonspor or Fenerbahce. Both have 54 points from 21 games, with Trabzon having the better goal difference.

Aykut's goal which beat Gaziantep gave Fenerbahce their ninth successive victory, the last five without a goal against.

Besiktas are third on 48 points, and Galatasaray are fourth on 47. Dean Saunders, back after injury, scored the winner against Genclerbirligi.

Ertugrul scored twice with penalties as Turkey came from behind to beat Belarus 3-2 in a friendly in Izmir. This was Turkey's 16th successive game without defeat. Since Fatih Terim became coach they have won 13 games, drawn eight and lost only four. "We made some silly mistakes, and have to learn from them," said Terim.

HASAN CEMALI

Dean delight . . . Saunders scores for Galatasaray

Malta

Kosanovic has a lot to do

MALTA disappointed again in the recent international tournament, which, as expected, was won by Euro finalists Russia.

New national coach Milorad Kosanovic, a Yugoslav, could only watch and plan from the stands for the big task he has ahead.

Caretaker national team coach Robert Gatt, who was in charge of the team during the tournament, fielded experimental sides. A 2-0 defeat against a Russian side at full strength and a creditable goalless draw against Slovenia both proved to be positive experiences, but a 4-1 defeat against Iceland threw Maltese football back into depression.

Kosanovic said: "It is a big challenge and the first priority will be to improve the standard of play. Small countries can play good football. Cyprus is a good example."

With Carmel Busuttil quitting the national team for good, Kosanovic's task in getting back some pride and esteem seems even more difficult.

Valletta slumped to their first defeat of the season, 2-1 to rivals Hamrun. Sliema failed to capitalise, losing to Floriana, and Valletta soon recovered, scoring eight against St. Patricks.

DOMENICO AQUILINA

Israel

Call for the Rabbi!

WHEN life's problems become too hard to handle in the Land of the Bible, it is time to call for divine assistance.

This was the case when administrators from Hapoel Beersheva decided to invoke heavenly aid by visiting the grave of their neighbourhood talmudic mystic, the revered Rabbi Baba Sali.

There has been nothing but misery for the club's fans this season. The troubles started when the team crashed out of the UEFA Cup with two catastrophic defeats against Barcelona. Hapoel never recovered from the 7-0 and 5-0 hidings, and have been plunging down the domestic standings ever since.

The recent reappointment of former coach Vitali Savchenko has done nothing to turn the tide, as evidenced by the team's disastrous defeat at the first hurdle in the State Cup against Second Division Hapoel Kiryat Shmona.

Disciples of Rabbi Baba Sali pointed out to club officials that the problem was due to the fact that the team plays on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath.

The Beersheva management must now decide whether to opt for playing remaining home matches on Friday, a move that could drastically reduce gate receipts or continuing to turn out on the Jewish day of rest.

At the top of the National League the title race has shrunk to a three-club affair, after leaders Maccabi Tel Aviv overcame fourth-placed Hapoel Haifa 1-0 to open a nine-point gap between the two clubs. Betar Jerusalem and Maccabi Haifa remain at the heels of the defending champions.

ORI LEWIS

Albania

Teuta's double chance

TEUTA are in with a chance of a double, leading the League table and reaching the Cup semi-finals.

They are three points ahead of SK Tirana and six clear of Flamurtari, and must be favoured to reach the Cup Final, even though they struggled against Vllaznia in the quarter-final, being held to a 1-1 draw at home after winning the away leg by the only goal. In the semi-final they face Flamurtari, who beat Shkumbini 4-1 on aggregate.

Olimpik (formerly Dinamo Tirana) beat FK Partizani 2-1 and 1-0, and now face SK Tirani, for whom Aurel Miloti scored all the goals in a 3-0 aggregate defeat of Elbasani.

GEZIM NUSHI

Greece

AEK on top

GEORGIAN striker Temur Ketsbaia and team-mate Vassilis Tsartas led AEK Athens to a 3-1 home victory over Ethnikos Piraeus to continue their team's winning ways and the leadership in the Greek First Division with 53 points.

Ketsbaia scored twice and hit a post once while Tsartas scored another and hit the woodwork three times. The goal lifted Tsartas to top of the league scoring charts with 17 goals.

Panathinaikos Athens kept pace with AEK following a 3-1 away triumph over Panionios Nea Smyrni. Polish striker Krzysztof Warzycha scored twice and is currently the second-top scorer on 16 goals. Panathinaikos are just one point behind AEK.

Third-place Olympiakos Piraeus were also not to be denied a win, thrashing Aris Thessaloniki 4-0 at home and remaining just three points behind the leaders.

AEK made a big step towards winning the League Cup when they eliminated Panathinaikos in the quarter-finals. They join PAOK Thessaloniki, Apollon Athens and Athinaikos Vironas in the next round.

Athinaikos may be a surprise team in the Cup semi-finals – they are 11th in the First Division – but a lot of people still remember them from 1990 when they nearly eliminated Manchester United from the UEFA Cup, forcing the British powerhouse into extra time.

Meanwhile, Greek tax officials have put together a long list of suspected tax evaders, including numerous soccer players, who will be asked to report to the tax office for questioning.

In another development, a British business group has reportedly proposed buying stock of Panionios. The group offered £1.6million for 57 per cent of the shares. The club's board voted for the deal, according to the Athens daily newspaper *Ta Nea*. The British businessmen, who were not named, initially showed interest in buying PAOK, but that club had already secured a deal with another bidder.

LOU ECONOMPOULOS

Denmark

Laudrup may miss Euro 96

Sponsorship row . . . Real Madrid's Michael Laudrup

CHRISTIAN LONSTRUP has been lined up to replace Michael Laudrup in Denmark's team for Euro 96 if the Real Madrid star fails to settle his differences with the Danish.

Laudrup is in dispute with the DBU over sponsorship contracts which prevent him from arranging individual deals with firms other than the Danish dairies who have the rights to Denmark's national team.

He pulled out of a trip to Thailand for the four-nation Kings Cup tournament in Bangkok, leaving the stage free for 24-year-old Lonstrup to make his international debut. The elegant midfielder from FC Copenhagen took his chance admirably as draws against Romania and Finland, followed by victory against hosts Thailand, put the Danes in the final.

Lonstrup came on as substitute against Thailand at half-time and changed the game. He created the first two goals and scored the third as they won 3-1. Sadly, the final was lost 2-1 to a strong Romania side. No disgrace there.

The Danish squad, in Laudrup's absence, consisted only of domestic-based players – including veteran skipper Lars Olsen, as well as two other survivors of 1992 glory, Torben Piechnik and Henrik Larsen.

Now Lonstrup, the subject of a £1 million offer from Italian club Padova, hopes to play in the vital warm-up match against Germany at the end of March.

He said: "My ambition is to play in Euro 96. I know it will be tough to get into the final squad for the tournament, but if I can keep playing well I must have a chance."

Manager Richard Moller Nielsen has named an advance list of 38 players from which his squad will come. Nielsen will manage Finland after the summer, with Swedish coach Bo Johansson taking over. There was much mirth at his first fixture – a 'friendly' away to Sweden in Gothenburg in August!

JIM HOLDEN

Norway

Molde best indoors

TOP Norwegian clubs are preparing for the coming season by taking part in an indoor competition, playing in mini-leagues, with the winners of each meeting for the final matches.

Contrary to most indoor tournaments on the continent, where the indoor matches are played on restricted areas, the matches in Norway are played on full-size pitches with artificial grass. A number of these indoor arenas have been built in the past few years and a new dimension has been added to winter training.

Molde met Rosenborg in one semi-final and outplayed the reigning outdoor champions, 4-1. Petter Rudi has been appointed new captain of Molde by coach Aage Hareide.

In the other semi-final Bodo/Glimt beat Brann 3-1.

Brann have added some exciting new players to their squad this season: goalkeeper Birkir Kristinsson from Iceland, Claus Eftevaag from Start, Jan Ove Pedersen from Lillestrom and Thor Andre Flo from Tromso.

SIGURD ODEGAARD

Iceland

Wrong record for Logi

THERE was a harsh introduction to international football for national coach Logi Olafsson, who took charge of the Iceland side for the first time in a four-nation tournament in Malta.

Any thoughts the new boss may have had about a dream start to his international career floundered amid pouring rain and driving winds, and his side crashed 7-1 against Slovenia.

Iceland opened the scoring and were level at the break, but a disastrous second-half ended in the heaviest defeat suffered by Iceland since an 8-1 mauling by Holland in 1973.

Two days later, Olafsson's shocked troops faced Russia. This ended with a more respectable 3-0 defeat, despite some spectacular errors on the part of the Icelandic defence.

Some much-needed encouragement came for Olafsson in the final match of the tournament when his men cruised to a 4-1 win against Malta.

The results rekindled demands for a purpose-built, all-weather indoor stadium, which would enable domestic-based players to train all year round. The issue of who should pay for it remains, as ever, unresolved.

RAB CHRISTIE

Sweden

Martin set for move

MARTIN DAHLIN, Sweden's World Cup star is in demand. Dahlin, 27, says that five years at Monchengladbach are enough, which has alerted several clubs, including Bayern Munich and Fiorentina, where Dahlin's former Malmo team-mate Stefan Schwarz has been a revelation.

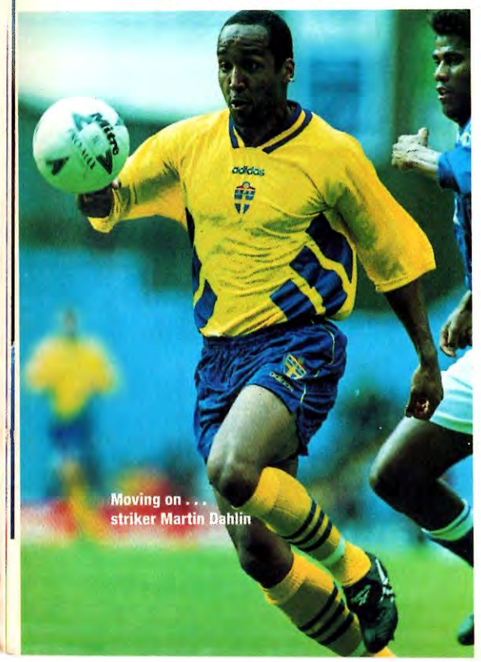
With Tomas Brolin having a tough time at Leeds, national coach Tommy Svensson must hope that Dahlin's move will go smoothly before the start of the World Cup qualifiers. Dahlin, with his gritty style, is very important to Sweden, although his goal return in the European Championship qualifiers was disappointing.

Svensson's squad for a tournament in the Far East included only home-based players. Those capped included Orgryte's Sebastian Henriksson, Magnus Svensson (Halmstad), Andreas Jacobsson (Helsingborg), and Gothenburg's Andreas Andersson.

International stopper Jan Eriksson has joined Helsingborg from Switzerland's Servette and Malmo have signed Christian Karlsson from Trelleborgs.

Degerfors were among the first Swedish clubs to feel the effects of the Bosman case, when they lost their Ulf Ottosson to Portugal's Chaves. In the past, Degerfors had turned down big transfer-fees for Ottosson. Now they have lost him without a krona in return.

PENTTI HIETANEN


Moving on . . . striker Martin Dahlin

Finland

Hyypia on the move

FINLAND'S international defender Sami Hyypia has joined Holland's Willem II, on a four-and-a-half-year contract.

Hyypia, 22, is rated one of Finland's most promising players and had created interest among foreign clubs, including Oldham.

Willem previously signed his former MyPa team-mate, Joonas Koikka, but a persistent groin injury has postponed his debut.

There are now six Finns with Dutch clubs, no doubt inspired by Jari Litmanen's success at Ajax.

HJK Helsinki were left fuming when Holland's Emmen snapped up defender Antti Heinola without paying a transfer fee. Heinola had a clause in his contract which would make him available for a transfer if an offer came from abroad. Emmen claim he is available on a free transfer and refused to pay a fee.

PENTTI HIETANEN

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The upper hand

Bob Vaughan on Slavia Prague, a once-great club who have turned the tables on their rivals Sparta in this season's League and UEFA Cup

BELFAST CELTIC used to play at Paradise, not Celtic Park. Slavia Prague always have been *V Edenu* (at Eden) in Vrsovice, Prague's 10th district.

But Slavia survived a different type of turmoil in the 1950s, still occupy the Dr Vacka Stadium and have just entered their 101st year with their sights firmly set on a 10th League title, their first in the history of the young Czech Republic.

This season has seen a change of fortunes in Czech soccer in general and in Prague *kopana*, as the game is called locally, in particular.

The international team have turned the corner under coach Dusan Uhrin and qualified for Euro 96 – and the Sparta hegemony has been broken.

Sparta, twice Czech Republic champions, looked to have taken over the new '1 Liga' in Bohemia/Moravia, and were riding high.

Their Letna Stadium had been remodelled for the Champions League fixtures the club expected and the CMFS (FA) had been awarding the most important Euro 96 qualifying games to the ground, although it now holds only 22,000, all-seated.

But nothing is for ever – just as the Communist era has gone, when it once seemed set in concrete, so football was to see changes.

Sparta did not make the Champions Cup under the new arrangements. They had to be content with the UEFA Cup, along with Slavia, who have gone from strength to strength in Europe as well as in the League. They put out Sturm Graz, Freiburg, then Lugano, and then Lens.

Few would have backed the 1994-95 League runners-up for any of these ties, but now Slavia are in their first European quarter-final as the last Czech representative. Sparta – not surprisingly – went out to Milan in the third round.

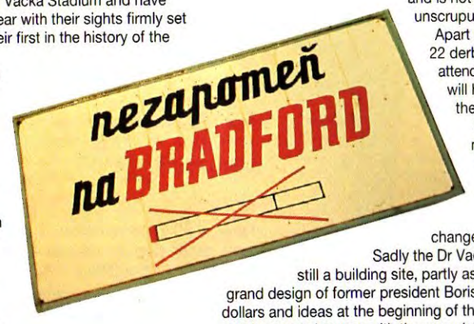
And while, this season, his team have been coming off second best in the League to Slavia, Sparta president Petr Mach has had his problems off the field.

The public wondered why Sparta had not had a penalty given against them for almost a season and a half; 'heavies' were removing investigative journalists from the press box at the Letna; and paying for ground improvements was proving troublesome.

As last autumn wore on, internationals such as Kouba, unhappy at not receiving bonuses, began looking at offers from abroad, especially as the chances of Champions League football dipped.

While Slavia fans basked in the glory of their team's new-found leading role, Sparta's support declined and in January a sniper took a different sort of pot shot at Mach as it became clear his club were deep in debt – even the telephone was about to be disconnected.

Although Sparta have played their opening fixtures in the second part of the season, their future is in doubt. Clearly the car mechanic turned businessman president has a few bob to find, and is not without unscrupulous enemies.



Apart from the March 22 derby with Slavia, attendances probably will hover around the 5,000 mark.

So Slavia are making the running with a capable coach after many a recent change on the bench.

Sadly the Dr Vacka Stadium is still a building site, partly as a legacy of the grand design of former president Boris Korbul, whose dollars and ideas at the beginning of the 1990s were to put the ground on par with the remodelled Letna.

The rebuilding is ongoing, although the main stand, with its wooden benches and sign warning spectators: 'Don't forget Bradford', will remain. For the moment, games such as the AS Roma tie will be played, not, heaven forbid, at the Letna, but at the Strahov.

The stadium above the Strahov Monastery is better suited to athletics and has only the original 1978 lights, but at least it has 12,000 seats and announcements are not confused, as in Eden, with train departure tannoys booming out of nearby Visovice Station.

Slavia's fate, however, is more likely to be decided in the return in Rome's Olympic Stadium, the like of which perhaps only keeper Stejskal has experienced.

Slavia are unlikely to go as far in a modern European competition as they managed pre-war in the top knockout trophy of those days, the Mitropa Cup.

Slavia came into existence in late May 1895, some two years after Sparta. Football clubs developed from cycling, gymnastic and social associations, which, in Slavia's case, incorporated the "true and correct sense of Slav family values".

From modest beginnings, and football was not accepted by certain strata of society in the pre-1914 Empire, a League competition emerged and Slavia were founder members in 1912.

From 1927 until politics and war made it impossible to continue, the best two clubs in the Central European Championships competed for the Mitropa Cup, the baby of football functionary extraordinaire, Hugo Meisl, a son of Bohemia, but Austria FA and Mitropa Cup organising secretary.

Do not let anyone say Slavia have no European pedigree! They were the first Mitropa winners in 1927, beating Rapid Vienna 7-3 on aggregate, finalists in

...den . . . a tractor in the 'directors' car park *(below)*; the 'Don't forget Bradford' no-smoking sign *(above left)* in the main stand *(above right)*

CROATIA

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
No previous participation

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

4.9.94. – Tallinn (Att: 1,250)
ESTONIA 0
CROATIA 2 (Suker 44, 75)
Croatia: Ladic – Turkovic, Jarni, Stimac, Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic (Cvitanovic 46), Prosinecki, Suker, Boban, Boksic.

9.10.94. – Zagreb (Att: 12,000)
CROATIA 2 (Jerkan 56, Kozniku 61)
LITHUANIA 0
Croatia: Ladic – Mladenovic, Jarni, Bilic, Jerkan, Stimac, Kozniku, Asanovic, Suker, Boban, Boksic.

16.1.95. – Palermo (Att: 39,000)
ITALY 1 (D Baggio 90)
CROATIA 2 (Suker 32, 60)
Croatia: Ladic – Brajkovic, Jarni, Stimac, Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic, Prosinecki (Mladenovic 58), Suker, Boban, Jurcevic (Kozniku 90).

25.3.95. – Zagreb (Att: 25,000)
CROATIA 4 (Boban 13, Suker 21, 76, Prosinecki 70)
UKRAINE 0
Croatia: Ladic – Jurcevic, Jarni, Pavlicic, Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic, Prosinecki, Boksic (Turkovic 60), Boban, Suker.

29.3.95. – Vilnius (Att: 9,000)
LITHUANIA 0
CROATIA 0
Croatia: Ladic – Brajkovic, Jarni, Stimac, Pavlicic, (Mladenovic 46), Bilic, Asanovic, Prosinecki, Suker, Soldo, Boksic.

26.4.95. – Zagreb (Att: 25,000)
CROATIA 2 (Prosinecki 17, Suker 90)
SLOVENIA 0
Croatia: Ladic* – Jurcevic (Gabric 12), Jarni, Stimac, Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic, Prosinecki, Suker, Boban, Boksic.
**Ladic sent off, 12min.*

11.6.95. – Kiev (Att: 10,000)
UKRAINE 1 (Kalitvintsev 13)
CROATIA 0
Croatia: Gabric* – Pavlicic (Mrmic 30), Jarni, Soldo, Jerkan, Bilic, Asanovic (Pralija 47), Mladenov, Suker, Boksic, Boban (Butorovic 38).
**Gabric sent off, 28min.*

3.9.95. – Rijeka (Att: 25,000)
CROATIA 7 (Mladenovic 3, Suker 19, 58, 90, Boksic 29, Boban 42, Stimac 81)
ESTONIA 1 (Reim 17)
Croatia: Ladic (Mrmic 30) – M Mladenovic, Jarni, Stimac (Turkovic 82), Jerkan, Bilic (Pralija 75), Stanic, Prosinecki, Suker, Boban, Boksic.

8.10.95 – Split (Att: 40,000)
CROATIA 1 (Suker 47pen)
ITALY 1 (Albertini 29)
Croatia: Ladic – Jurcevic (Kozniku 46), Mladenovic, Stimac, Jerkan, Pavlicic, Asanovic, Stanic, Suker, Boban, Boksic.

15.11.95 – Ljubljana (Att: 10,000)
SLOVENIA 1 (Gliaha 36)
CROATIA 2 (Suker 41, Jurcevic 55)
Croatia: Ladic – Jurcevic, Jarni, Soldo, Bilic, Jerkan, Pralija (Mladenovic 62), Prosinecki, Suker, Stanic, Mornar.

FINAL TABLE – GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	**10**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**22**	**5**	**23**
Italy	10	7	2	1	20	6	23
Lithuania	10	5	1	4	13	12	16
Ukraine	10	4	1	5	11	15	13
Slovenia	10	3	2	5	13	13	11
Estonia	10	0	0	10	3	31	0

Patriot games

Zdravko Reic on the pride, the passion and the problems facing Croatia's national side

POLITICAL duties in the Republic of Croatia at the end of June may have to be carried out without the help of President Tudjman. He has been invited to go to England and see his countrymen playing in the European Championships.

Not the qualifying round or the quarter-finals or even the semi-final. No, he has been invited to see Croatia in the final.

Miroslav Blazevic, who coaches the national squad, made the invitation soon after Croatia qualified by topping their group, ahead of Italy.

Blazevic was then talking of his men causing "the surprise of the century" in the competition proper, and saying: "We have the best players in the world. We'll be champions." But now that the euphoria has worn off a little, he is more cautious.

"I hope that at last we will be proven as a soccer power," is his official comment. "Whether we will win the championship depends on many things, including luck."

There is no doubt that Croatia's record for producing quality players stands comparison with that of any nation.

Since the country became independent from the old Yugoslavia in September 1992, more than 1,300 players have moved abroad. Not all have been successful, but those who have include such as Zvonimir Boban, Davor Suker, Robert Prosinecki, Robert Jarni, Igor Stimac, Slaven Bilic and Alen Boksic. And some good ones have stayed to play in their domestic league, too, including Alijosa Asanovic, Drazen Ladic and Milan Rapaic.

Many of these players helped Yugoslavia to win the junior World Cup in Chile in 1987 and have gone on to great things. Most of them have to move abroad to cash in on their talents, but the Croatian game still goes on producing a seemingly endless list of potential replacements, even though international results of matches played without the exiles have been poor.

A 4-1 defeat by Slovakia in Bratislava and a 2-2 draw with a poor Hungary team in Budapest showed that the current crop of home-based players are not yet of true international standard.

Tomislav Ivic, who formerly worked with Blazevic in an unusual two-headed coaching pair, is rather more cautious than his old colleague. "We have great players, true," he says. "But we do not have a great team. They need to work more, practice more."

Ivic now takes a rather more detached view of the situation. A few months ago he had an argument with Blazevic, who is strongly supported by members of the Croatian FA and by President Tudjman.

There could be only one winner in a major bust-up, and Ivic was soon on his way to another coaching position, in the United Arab Emirates.

Despite Blazevic's experience and knowledge, his old partner will be missed. Ivic has been in charge of some of Europe's greatest clubs all around the continent, including Holland (Ajax), Belgium (Anderlecht), France (Paris St Germain and Marseille), Portugal (Benfica and Porto) and Spain (Real Madrid) as well as Hadjuk Split. He has won 14 major trophies, and few men can go anywhere near matching his experience.

Certainly not Blazevic, although he too has absorbed considerable knowledge through spells in France at Nantes, Switzerland (Grasshopper) and PAOK in Greece.

Croats who go along with Ivic's pragmatism, rather than Blazevic's romanticism, are quick to point out that the team's outstanding performance of the Euro campaign happened when Ivic was in sole charge.

Blazevic was under suspension, after an incident at a match involving his club, FC Croatia – at one time he was the owner, the president and the coach all at once – and Auxerre in France. Ivic took the team to Palermo, and returned with a 2-1 win over an Italian team strongly favoured to top the group.

A few weeks earlier, Croatia had shown that they were on their way to becoming a major power, even in such a short time, when they beat Spain 2-0 in Valencia. This was a friendly, not a competitive match, but the team's performance made everybody take notice.

Playing for Croatia means a great deal to the present squad. During the long conflict between various components of the former Yugoslavia, people have been fighting and killing. Others show national pride on the soccer field, wanting other nations to take notice of them and recognise their right to exist. Above all, Croats want their independence.

> ***'Playing for Croatia means a great deal to the players. During the long conflict in the former Yugoslavia, many people have been fighting and killing. Others have shown national pride on the soccer field, wanting other nations to recognise their right to exist. Above all, the Croatians want their independence'***

Boban, one of the key figures in the squad, sums up the situation by saying: "Qualifying for England means a very great deal to us. But now we have the real work to do. It is essential that we respect every one of our opponents – and we want them to respect us, too."

Few if any of the other teams in the competition will play with the enthusiasm and desire of the Croats. The atmosphere of comradeship is tangible, showing the real meaning of team spirit.

Unfortunately there has been much political wrangling behind the scenes. National FA president Mladan Vodiu was forced to resign after one such dispute. Ex-war hero Djuro Brodarac took over but fell foul of Tudjman by refusing his request to cut the top division from 16 teams to 10.

So Brodarac left, to be succeeded by Nada Vidosevic, who is combining the post with that of president of Hadjuk Split. He is planning for the Premiership cut that Tudjman wants, but has rather more pressing problems to solve before then.

Some nations are still reluctant to play Croatia because of the violence that still flares up – a friendly with England at Wembley last September was cancelled at short notice – and the authorities have much more to do before persuading possible visitors that they will be safe.

And then there is the old problem of money.

Even before the qualifying programme began, the players agreed that they should be paid expenses only unless and until they won a place in the finals. The sum decided was £45,000 for every player appearing in all the group matches.

Davor Suker turned out to be the only ever-present, and promptly showed solidarity with his team-mates by demanding that they should all get £45,000, too.

That caused problems galore, for little money had been brought in from the qualifying games, with heavy expenses and sponsors in short supply. "We are willing to do anything for our country," said a statement issued by the players. "But we don't play for free."

In the end, they got their way. But the question of pay for the finals has not yet been resolved, and it could become a major problem if it is not sorted out soon.

How ironic that players with such pride should be involved in such problems.

KEY MAN: DAVOR SUKER

THOSE who know Davor Suker well firmly believe the European Championships will propel the prolific striker into the realms of international superstardom.

He does not plan to disappoint. He spent the winter learning English – he already speaks fluent Spanish and can communicate in Italian – in order to speak to reporters in England without the need for translators.

Born 28 years ago, Suker started with his home town club, FC Osijek, before moving to Dinamo Zagreb. Next season, Suker moves to Real Madrid after four years with Sevilla, for whom he scored 17 goals in 32 games last term.

For the Croatian national side, his scoring rate has been even more impressive: sixteen goals in 15 matches, scoring in every Euro 96 qualifying game, including two against Italy in Palermo.

"The first part of my plan is completed – to play for a really big team," says Suker. "The next target is England. We will survive the preliminary matches. The most important match will be the quarter-finals. If we win them, we could be European champions."

Suker puts much of his success in the national team down to his striking partner Alen Boksic. Few people, he thinks, will be able to stop the Lazio forward in England.

Suker is popular with his national team-mates and off the pitch has taken a lead in negotiating bonus money on behalf of them. "Our strength is our team spirit. There's no jealousy among us. We all fight for our country, for the world's recognition of Croatia," he says.

THE COACH

Miroslav BLAZEVIC
10.2.35.
One of Croatia's finest and most experienced coaches. He was born in Travnik, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although his two uncles died in World War Two fighting for an independent Croatia. Played in midfield or defence for Sarajevo, Rijeka and Dinamo (Now Croatia) Zagreb. Later he moved abroad and coached with particular success in Switzerland (Lausanne, Grasshopper, Sion, Vevey and the Swiss national team) as well as in France with Nantes. Succeeded Vlatko Markovic as national coach in 1994. Recently spent time in prison in connection with the Marseille bribery scandal. He was released without charge.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Tonci GABRIC
11.3.61. Hajduk Split. 4 caps.
Spent five years with Rijeka, and then two in Greece with PAOK. Joined Cibalia Vinkovic after being threatened by Serb extremists in Greece. Quick reactions and physically very fit. Hero of Hajduk's run to the 1994-95 Champions League quarter-finals. Oldest player in squad.

Drazen LADIC
1.1.63. Croatia Zagreb. 20 caps.
The first-choice national team keeper and holder of record for national appearances. With Croatia Zagreb for 10 years. The heaviest player in the squad, at 90kg.

Marijan MRMIC
6.5.65. Varteks Varazdin. 2 caps.
Equally skilled as the other two keepers, but suffers from not playing for a big team. Set to join Austria's Sturm Graz this summer. Debut as a sub against Ukraine in June last year after Gabric was sent off.

DEFENDERS

Slaven BILIC
11.9.68. West Ham (Eng). 16 caps.
Spent two years in Germany with Karlsruhe before moving to England. Remembered in Germany for being the only foreigner to become his team's captain during his first season. Voted in a German Team of the Season for his aerial ability. Law school graduate. A Croatian League and Cup winner with Hajduk Split.

Darko BUTOROVIC
12.8.70. Hakduk Split. 1 cap.
Right-back. Still knocking on the national side's door. Only international cap against Ukraine in June 1995.

Mirsad HIBIC
11.10.73. Hajduk Split. Uncapped.
Arrived in Split as a refugee from Zenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Strong in the air.

Robert JARNI
26.10.68. Real Betis (Spa). 16 caps.
After four years in Italy (Bari, Torino, Juventus) he moved to Spain last summer. Irreplaceable on the left side, the only position where there is no alternative in the squad. Incredibly fast – can run 100m in 11 seconds. Started career at Hajduk Split. Capped at full international level by Yugoslavia and a member of their 1987 World Youth Championship-winning side.

Nicola JURCEVIC
14.9.66. Freiburg (Ger). 10 caps (2 goals).
First came to prominence as one of the stars of Casino Salzburg's run to the 1994 UEFA Cup Final and twice a title-winner in Austria. Versatile player, best in an attacking role, who is used as a right wing-back for the national side. Debut against Romania in December 1990.

Nikola JERKAN
8.12.64. Real Oviedo (Spa). 15 caps (1 goal).
The national team libero. Calm and skilled at reading opponents. Biggest strength is his consistency. In his sixth season with Oviedo. Previously with Hajduk Split. Tallest player, along with Soldo, in the squad (1.89m). Debut against Australia in July 1992.

Dubravko PAVLICIC
28.11.67. Hercules (Spa). 12 caps.
Currently earning rave reviews in the Spanish Second Division where his team are heading for promotion. Another member of the 1987 Chile team. Easily recognised by his long hair. Debut against Australia in July 1992.

Zvonimir SOLDO
2.11.67. Croatia Zagreb. 6 caps.
Likely reserve for Nikola Jerkan and currently the best player in the Croatian League. A determined opponent who spreads self-confidence to his team-mates. A Croatian Cup-winner with Inker in 1992.

Igor STIMAC
6.9.67. Derby County (Eng). 13 caps (1 goal).
Has been instrumental in Derby's promotion push this season. When he arrived, they were 17th; they currently lead the First Division. Intelligent player, unquestionable authority on the ground, strong in one-to-one challenges and tough in the air. Started with Hajduk Split; spent time in Spain with Cadiz. One of the 1987 Yugoslav team in Chile. Popular with women, who compare him to Richard Gere. Married to an ex-Miss Yugoslavia. Debut against Romania in December 1990.

Dzevad TURKOVIC
17.8.72. Croatia Zagreb. 6 caps.
Started his career as a forward, then dropped back into midfield, but has played his best matches recently on the right side of defence. Good at one-on-one, and gets his fair share of goals as well. Smallest member of the squad (1.71m, 66kg). Montenegrin national with Croatian citizenship.

Midfielders

Aljosa ASANOVIC
14.12.65. Hajduk Split. 14 caps (1 goal).
Experienced midfielder with great vision. Scored Croatia's first ever international goal, against the US in October 1990. Free-kick specialist. Over 200 games for Hajduk, with whom he won two League titles and a Cup, before moving to Metz, Cannes and Montpellier in France and Real Valladolid in Spain. In July 1994, he returned home to Hajduk Split who, ironically, had sued him when he left them for France. With more will and self-discipline, could have had an outstanding international career.

Zvonimir Boban

Zvonimir BOBAN
8.10.68. Milan (Ita). 14 caps (2 goals).
National team captain, now in his fourth year with Milan and the jewel in Croatia's soccer crown. Remarkable ball control, accurate shooting and particularly threatening at free-kicks. One of the 1987 World Youth Cup-winning Chile team. Missed out on a place in Yugoslavia's 1990 World Cup squad because of a six-month suspension for kicking a Serbian policeman during a now infamous disturbance, on the eve of the Yugoslav war, at a match between his then club, Dinamo Zagreb, and Red Star Belgrade. Played in Milan's superb 4-0 victory over Barcelona in the 1994 Champions Cup Final and was on the losing side against Ajax last May.

Mladen MLADENOVIC
13.9.64. Gamba Osaka (Jap). 15 caps (3 goals).
Very strong footballer (nick-named Rambo) who plays with tremendous commitment. Previously with Casino Salzburg in Austria.

Alen Boksic

Nenad PRALIJA
11.12.70. Hajduk Split. 3 caps.
Voted the best domestic-based player in 1995. Hard-working player who scored 11 goals in 21 games for Hajduk last season. Came from nowhere to national team within a year. Brother Denis was killed by a land mine in the civil war in former Yugoslavia. Has won two Croatian League titles and two Cups with Hajduk.

Robert PROSINECKI
12.1.69. Barcelona (Spa). 10 caps (3 goals).
Hugely talented player who was a member of Yugoslavia's 1987 World Youth team and 1990 World Cup squad. With Red Star Belgrade, he won three Yugoslav titles, two domestic Cups and, in 1992, a Champions Cup medal. Joined Real Madrid in 1992 but failed to live up to his huge promise and was extremely unlucky with injuries; he has torn the main muscle in his right leg six times. Successful comeback with Real Oviedo last season, attracting the attention of Johan Cruyff, who took him to Barça last summer. Father is Croatian, but his mother is a Serb. A heavy smoker with a lion tattoo on his right leg.

Tomislav RUKAVINA
14.10.74. Croatia Zagreb. Uncapped.
Talented player who has yet to get the chance to prove himself on an international stage. Although only 22, he has already played for Croatia Zagreb, Hajduk Split, FC Croatia and FC Osijek, his first club.

Forwards

Alen BOKSIC
31.1.70. Lazio (Ita). 11 caps (1 goal).
A talented, fast and powerful goalscorer. Signed by Marseille from Hajduk Split in 1991 after scoring the winning goal in the Yugoslav Cup Final against Red Star. Loaned out to Cannes but returned for 1992-93, winning a Champions Cup medal and finishing as the season's top scorer in France. Moved to Italy during 1993-94 season after Lazio had paid £8million for him.

Igor CVITANOVIC
1.11.70. Croatia Zagreb. 6 caps (2 goals).
The leading scorer in domestic football since independence in 1991, having scored 88 goals. International debut against Mexico in October 1992.

Ivica MORNAR
12.1.74. Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger). 3 caps.
The most promising young Croatian striker around. Extraordinarily fast player who made his international debut against Spain in March 1994. Moved to Germany from Hajduk Split earlier this season.

Robert SPEHAR
13.5.70. Club Brugge (Bel). 5 caps.
Top scorer in the Croatian League for FC Osijek last season with 25 goals. Moved to Belgium last summer.

Mario STANIC
10.4.72. Club Brugge (Bel). 3 caps.
Moved to Belgium from Benfica after a spell with Sporting Lisbon. Three caps for Yugoslavia. Played for FC Zeljeznicar in Sarajevo, but left when Serbs shelled the city. A Croatian title-winner with Croatia Zagreb.

Davor SUKER
1.1.68. Sevilla (Spa). 15 caps (16 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Goran VLAOVIC
7.8.72. Padova (Ita). 4 caps.
Suffered severe a head injury during a Serie A game in September 1995, but is now recovering well. Youngest player ever to represent Croatia when he made his debut, aged 19, against Australia in July 1992.
Above information correct at 20.2.96.

CZECH REP

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: Third Place
1964, 1968, 1972: 1st round
1976: Champions
1980: Third place
1984, 1988, 1992: 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
6.9.94. – Prague (Att: 10,226)
CZECH REPUBLIC 6 (Smejkal 6, Kubik 33, Siegl 35, 49, 81, Berger 89)
MALTA 1 (Laferla 75)
Czech Rep: Kouba – Kubik, Suchoparek, Novotny, Latal (Vesely 86), Nemecek, Frydek (Berger 83), Smejkal, Nemec, P Kuka, Siegl.

12.10.94. – Valletta (Att: 4,000)
MALTA 0
CZECH REPUBLIC 0
Czech Rep: Srnicek - Kubik, Suchoparek, Novotny *, Latal, Nemec, Nemecek (Kadlec), Hlasek, Smejkal (M Frydek), Skuhravy, Kuka. *Novotny sent off, 57min.*

16.11.94. – Rotterdam (Att: 45,000)
HOLLAND 0
CZECH REPUBLIC 0
Czech Rep: Srnicek – Latel, Suchoparek, Hapal, Kubic, Kadlec, Nemec, Bilek, P Kuka (Samec 90), Siegl, Poborsky (Berger 75).

29.3.95. – Ostrava (Att: 5,549)
CZECH REPUBLIC 4 (Kadlec 5, Berger 18, 63, Kuka 69)
BYELORUSSIA 2 (Gerasimec 44pen, Gurinovich 88)
Czech Rep: Srnicek – Kadlec, Repka, Hapal, Latal, Nemecek, Berger, Frydek (Bilek 86), Smejkal, P Kuka, Siegl (Samec 89).

26.4.95. – Prague (Att: 17,463)
CZECH REPUBLIC 3 (Skuhravy 49, Nemecek 57, Berger 62)
HOLLAND 1 (Jonk 7)
Czech Rep: Kouba – Hapal, Kadlec, Suchoparek, Repka, Nemec, Nemecek, Berger, Frydek (Latal 46), Kuka (Siegl 89), Skuhravy.

7.6.95. – Luxembourg (Att: 1,500)
LUXEMBOURG 1 (Hellers 89)
CZECH REPUBLIC 0
Czech Rep: Kouba – Repka (Frydek 68), Suchoparek, Kadlec, Latal, Nemec, Nemecek, Hapal, Berger, Kuka, Skuhravy (Drulak 62).

16.8.95. – Oslo (Att: 22,054)
NORWAY 1 (Berg 27)
CZECH REPUBLIC 1 (Suchoparek 84)
Czech Rep: Kouba – Kadlec, Hapal, Suchoparek, Repka, Latal (Poborsky 78), Nemec, Frydek, Berger (Nedved 46), Drulak (Samec 78), P Kuka.

6.9.95. – Prague (Att: 19,522)
CZECH REPUBLIC 2 (Skuhravy 6pen, Drulak 87)
NORWAY 0
Czech Rep: Kouba – Kadlec, Repka, Suchoparek, Latal, Nemecek, Frydek (Poborsky 71), Nedved, Nemec, P Kuka (Drulak 17), Skuhravy (Lokvenc 79)

7.10 .95. - Minsk (Att: 20,000)
BYELORUSSIA 0
CZECH REPUBLIC 2 (Frydek 25, Berger 84)
Czech Rep: Kouba – Kadlec, Repka, Nedved (P Berger 73), Hapal, Latal, Nemecek (Hornak 15), Frydek (Poborsky 87), Nemec, Drulak, Kuka.

15.11.95. – Prague (Att: 22,530)
CZECH REPUBLIC 3 (Drulak 35, 46, Berger 57)
LUXEMBOURG 0
Czech Rep: Kouba – Kadlec, Latal, Suchoparek, Hapal, Nemecek (Poborsky 75), Nedved, Frydek, Berger (Smicer 82), Kuka (Lokvenc 87), Drulak.

Final Table – Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	**10**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**21**	**6**	**21**
Holland	10	6	2	2	23	5	20
Norway	10	6	2	2	17	7	20
Belarus	10	3	2	5	8	13	11
Luxembourg	10	3	1	6	3	21	10
Malta	10	0	2	8	2	22	2

Hope springs eternal

Bob Vaughan looks on the bright side for one of the tournament's least favoured teams

FATE had decreed otherwise when the Representation of Czechs and Slovaks (RCS) fought for the goal in Brussels that would have meant qualification for the USA World Cup.

Miro Kadlec's run was unfairly halted inches outside the penalty area. The free-kick was wasted. Belgium only had to play out time to manage a goalless draw.

That was over two years ago. The legendary Vaclav Jezek, who had taken over during the qualifying competition, was denied an American swansong and since that cold winter night both the veteran coach and just under 75 years of Czecho-Slovak football have been laid to rest.

The Euro 96 qualifiers was the first competition in which the divorcees, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, competed separately and, to apparently keep some sort of symmetry, they began on the long and arduous road to England on successive days.

The Czechs met Malta in Ostrava's oval Bazaly, where the required high-scoring win, 6-1, was achieved. Dusan Uhrin's team were on the way in Group Five, where more difficult hurdles awaited.

As September 1994 ended Uhrin was planning for Valetta, where the Czechs stumbled, missing a penalty and throwing away a couple of points.

Better followed with the same 0-0 score in Holland while Norway started to set the pace as season 1994-95 ended. August 16, 1995, proved a vital day. Norway were in mid-season, Uhrin had had to get his team together almost before pre-season training was over, but 1-1 in Oslo set up a memorable end to the qualifying tournament.

Norway, who had led for months, did not gain another point. The Czechs won the group by a point, the Dutch had to play off with the Irish.

Although the Czechs had done it the hard way, Uhrin's patience had been rewarded and his assistant, Ivo Viktor, would go to another final series as he had done with the victorious CSSR team in Belgrade under Jezek and Venglos 20 years earlier.

Uhrin had had a successful but difficult passage. The total of five points dropped woefully on small grounds to the likes of Malta and the Grand Duchy had demonstrated frailty against lesser opponents, but the convincing home wins over Dutch and Norwegian teams who had reached the 1994 World Cup finals showed the quality of the foreign-based stars.

Fanatical crowds at the Letna in Prague had helped and Uhrin had overcome some difficult relations with players' employers abroad and perhaps some diffidence about representing a Ceska Republika which might have been a poor advertisement for those operating outside the Czech League and nearing the signing of a last, lucrative contract.

'The Czechs will be plunged into deep water straight away, having to play Germany at the start and Russia at the end, with little respite in between – a match against Italy . . . but they know that about every two decades the Slavs have come from nowhere to finish well in a major competition'

Goalscoring proved a problem against the smaller nations in the away ties and at the other end of the spectrum keeper Kouba, smaller in stature than his giant predecessors, had to establish himself despite the death of his father.

Sparta had their problems maintaining a regular Champions League challenge and off the field there was doubt over the club's future, which remains.

Now Uhrin faces a new challenge, the biggest of his coaching and managerial career which massively overshadows a modest playing spell with the likes of Dynamo Kobylisy in Regional Division Three in Bohemia.

While accepted as a successful club coach, initially with Cheb and subsequently at Sparta, Uhrin knows it can be a different matter when having to deal with top stars spread from Tenerife to Tyneside, Geneva to Gelsenkirchen.

Even if all is calm the possible *prima donnas* have heavy club responsibilities in foreign championships which will require their commitment almost to the start of Euro 96.

For example, Bundesliga-based Czechs Kadlec, Latal, Nemec, Berger and Kuka will not be out of the championship wood until the third week of May. Half the squad likely to be selected play abroad, so training camp dates and friendlies are proving difficult to arrange.

So far games have been confirmed with the Republic of Ireland and Turkey at home for March 27 and April 24, but more match practice will be needed.

The team will be plunged into deep water from the outset, having to play Germany at the start and Russia at the end, with little respite between – a match against Italy!

But there is a chance of the unfancied underdogs winning the support of enthusiastic neutrals in cities which arguably appreciated World Cup games in 1966 more than anywhere else.

The Czechs know the Russians from long years of international competition. They believe that the Italians may not travel well in Anglo-Saxon climes. And they know that about every two decades the Slavs have come from nowhere to finish well in a major competition.

In the 1934 World Cup the Dukla-based side of Masopust and Novak again took second place, after having to play off in Brussels with Scotland to reach Chile. In 1976 the Jezek-Venglos tandem schemed their team to a European Championship victory in Belgrade. The Germans were the opposition in that Final, and now they provide the first hurdle, at Old Trafford.

The five previous meetings in final competitions have been closely contested. They go back to Rome in June 1934, since when the Germans have won twice, drawn once and lost twice, memorably on a penalty shoot-out 20 seasons ago.

On the other hand the CSSR only ever won once in Germany, at Ludwigshafen, 4-3, in 1964.

Czechs are serious people, whether it be cooking, beer-making or drinking, or planning in sport, and perhaps they can scramble for a point as the giants knock spots off each other, win a game, and qualify.

Realistically, it looks an outside chance but Czech, if not Moravian, football is on an upswing internationally.

KEY MAN: MIROSLAV KADLEC

MIROSLAV KADLEC is the Kaiserslautern stopper who helped his club win their first Bundesliga title in 1991. It was also his inaugural season in Germany after the 1990 World Cup in Italy, where he was one of the most-sought 'Eastern' stars.

Kadlec had had five highly successful seasons with Tj Vitkovice and the Czechoslovak national team. 'The Lauterer' were his not unwise choice and 1990-91 he not only became used to the demands of the Bundesliga in 28 title-winning appearances but was also voted the best Libero by a panel of experts over the season.

Since then he has gone on to become a fixture in the RCS and Czech national teams. Earlier this season the 31-year-old one-time Cheb player passed 150 Bundesliga appearances and now needs one more full cap to top 50 for Czechoslovakia, the RCS and the Czech Republic.

Kadlec is a commanding, versatile, mobile defender who can also attack.

Now he anchors Uhrin's defence and looks forward to the challenge of facing Klinsmann, Ravanelli and Kiriakov.

Little will perturb Miro, who has seen it all before in Italy and in the European Cup but can his forward colleagues profit sufficiently from his constructive clearances and runs into enemy territory?

Petr Kouba

THE COACH

Dusan UHRIN

5.2.45.

The smiling Bohemian played most of his soccer at Third Regional League level, with Dynamo in the northern Prague suburb of Kobylisy. His was a modest career in 1960s and 1970s Prague where sport was an important release in a politically suffocated society but competition and standards were high and Uhrin performed well. A couple of successful seasons coaching Bohemians in Vrsovice and a spell in charge of the Czechoslvak Under-21s led to an appointment in Cheb with Red Star. Uhrin astonishingly took the tiny club to the top of the Czech League in a second spell in charge but soon Sparta were on his trail and he returned to the Letna, where he twice won the Championship. After the national team's failure to qualify for the USA World Cup, under the Representation of Czechs and Slovaks banner, Bohemia and Moravia's own association took over the running of football in the new Republic and coaching mentor Vaslar Jezek retired. Uhrin was appointed, and the rest is history. Uhrin and his assistant, Ivo Victor, now have contracts up to the end of World Cup 1998.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Petr KOUBA

28.1.69. Sparta Prague. 27 caps.

Father Pavel guarded the Dukla nets and won three caps in the 1960s. Player of the Year two seasons ago. Kouba Junior took over from Stejskal during the World Cup qualification and has kept his place. Not very tall for a goalkeeper or as spectacular as current challenger Srnicek. Is considering a move abroad.

Ludek MIKLOSKO

9.12.61. West Ham Utd (Eng). 40 caps.

The senior bouncing Czech guarding Premier League nets hails from Ostrava and came to England from Banik's Goalkeeping Academy. Now a fixture at Upton Park but has not played an international for some time. May be in the role of adviser on the bench.

Pavel SRNICEK

10.3.68. Newcastle Utd (Eng). 3 caps.

'The Flying Magpie' is well enough known in the North of England where he is keeping out £1m signing Shaka Hislop. Did well in the qualification matches in Valetta and Rotterdam but Kouba has been prefered since the Belarus game in Ostrava. If his sixth season on Tyneside brings Newcastle the title, he may get Uhrin's nod.

DEFENDERS

Petr GABRIEL

17.5.73. Viktoria Zizkov. 2 caps.

Young member of the Zizkov side who won the Cup two years ago and qualified for Europe. Had made 57 League appearances up to the beginning of the current season. Likely to have a learning role during the finals. International debut in last March's friendly with Finland.

Michal HORNAK

28.4.70. Sparta Prague. 2 caps.

Made his debut for Sparta at 19 but went to Cheb for a couple of seasons before returning to the capital midway through 1990-91. Became a regular the next year. Almost certainly will have to be content with sitting on the bench in England.

Miroslav KADLEC
22.6.64. Kaiserslautern (Ger). 49 caps (2 goals).
See profile, previous page.

Radoslav LATAL
6.1.70. Schalke (Ger). 24 caps (3 goals).
Was in the Czech army and a Dukla player when the 'change' came. Spent four years with Sigma Olomouc in Moravia. Went to the Knappen in 1994. Can be used at the back or in midfield.

Jiri LERCH
17.10.71. Slavia Prague. 1 cap.
A Slavia regular often used as a defensive midfielder. Like Suchoparek, is in for a busy Spring. His goals. seven in 123 outings to the beginning of this season, seem to confirm his role. Might get his chance if Latal were unfit.

Vaclav NEMECEK
25.1.67. Servette (Swi). 53 caps (6 goals).
Most experienced member of the squad. Now earning Swiss francs after a spell in the French League with FC Toulouse. At 29 still an important element in Uhrin's midfield planning. Won a string of Czech League titles with Sparta, and the Cup in his last season before signing for Toulouse. Started at Hradec Kralove.

Tomasd REPKA
2.1.74. Sparta Prague. 13 caps.
Moved earlier this season from Banik Ostrava where he had been since 1991. Now established as a member of Sparta's and the international team's back four. Looks bound to interest the Bundesliga or other top leagues clubs if he has a good tournament.

Jan SUCHOPAREK
23.9.69. Slavia Prague. 28 caps (2 goals).
One of the reasons for Slavia's top-of-the-table position at halfway in the Czech League and progress to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals. Partners Kadlec, who usually does the sweeping. Only Stejskal of Suchoparek's current colleagues has played more games, and he should top 180 this spring. A tough defender with the Czech Championship, Euro 96 preparation and Roma in the UEFA Cup on his mind this Spring.

Midfielders

Patrik BERGER
10.11.73. Borussia Dortmund (Ger). 12 caps (8 goals).
One of the Borussia star ensemble since moving from Sparta to the Ruhr. Possibly the Czech under greatest pressure this Spring as Dortmund aim to retain their Bundesliga title and progress in the Champions Cup. Excellent strike rate in the national team; still only 22.

Michal BILEK
13.4.65. Viktoria Zizkov. 34 caps (11 goals).
A main prop at Sparta and in the Czechoslovak and the RCS teams. Sometimes confused with Milos Belak from the time in the early 1990s when they played together in the national team. Had scored 54 goals in 286 League appearances over almost a decade and a half by the beginning of 1995-96. Uhrin is wisely retaining him in the squad though his last appearance was four years ago.

Martin FRYDEK
9.3.69. Sparta Prague. 21 caps (2 goals).
Was an important anchor against the Dutch in Prague and can operate at the back, as he did when substituting for Repka in the final qualifying win over Luxembourg. Started with Fourth Division Tatra Kolin before joining the current champions in 1989-90.

Pavel HAPL
27.7.69. Tenerife (Spa). 29 caps (1 goal).
An experienced and important member of the midfield set-up who started with Sigma Olomouc before moving for £1million to Bayer Leverkusen. Also had spells at Dukla and in the French League with Brest.

Vaclav Nemecek

Pavel NEDVED
30.8.72. Sparta Prague. 5 caps.
Made 19 appearances for Dukla Prague before leaving the Army club for Sparta four seasons ago. Has since commanded a place in midfield. Five European Cup-winners Cup games in his first season at the Letna established him but he has found it difficult to break in to the national team and hold down a regular place.

Jiri NEMEC
15.5.66. Schalke (Ger). 35 caps.
Began his career in Southern Bohemia with Dynamo Ceske Budejovice. Has captained the national team on numerous occasions and Uhrin will be relying on him to win the ball. Won all the honours at the Letna before signing for Schalke in 1993. A battler who never gives up.

Karel POBORSKY
30.5.72. Slavia Prague. 11 caps.
Another midfielder still struggling for a permanent place in the side. Last played against the Finns a year ago. Currently involved in the UEFA Cup quarter-final ties with Roma. Has averaged a goal every three games in his time at Eden. A likely attacking midfield option for Uhrin.

Forwards

Radek DRULAK
12.1.62. FC Petra Drnovice. 10 caps (4 goals).
The 1995 Footballer of the Year is blossoming late in international soccer, remarkably with the village club Drnovice, who are somehow managing to stay in the top Czech class. Drulak, a wanderer earlier in his career, has an impressive striking record – 105 goals in 227 appearances.

Pavel KUKA
19.7.68. Kaiserslautern (Ger). 39 caps (12 goals).
Had his chance for Slavia and the national team in 1990-91 when many players left for the West after the World Cup. Scored on his debut as a sub against Finland, a 1-1 draw. Soon became his club's chief playmaker and scorer. Eight goals in 10 Bundesliga appearances in his first season. The team will be expecting him to be the schemer and to provide the finish in the Finals.

Vratislav LOKVENC
27.9.75. Sparta Prague. 2 caps.
Still only 22 but fast approaching 100 League appearances. Eight goals in the autumn half of the season put him second behind Drulak's 16. Substituted for Kuka towards the end of the vital tie in Prague with Luxembourg. Joined Sparta from Hradec Kralove.

Petr SAMEC
14.2.64. Hradec Kralova. 9 caps (2 goals).
One of the stars of the Cup-winners Cup representatives, who narrowly went out to Dynamo Moscow. Had scored 17 goals in 67 League games before this current season.

Tomas SKUHRAVY
7.9.65. Genoa. 49 caps (17 goals)
Flamboyant striker from Ceske Budejovice in Southern Bohemia. Made eight appearances as an 18-year-old for Sparta in 1982-83 but after a couple of seasons at the Letna moved to Cheb. Returned to Sparta for a four-year spell in which he scored 55 goals, missing only seven games. Genoa then bought him and he made his Serie A debut in the autumn of 1990. Skuhravy is an old-style centre-forward in many ways, good in the air. At 21 he was a full international and now he will be aiming to do even better than his Italia 90 hat-trick against Costa Rica.

Vladimir SMICER
24.5.75. Slavia Praha. 2 caps.
Having a good season, both in the League and UEFA Cup. In the Autumn half of the Championship he managed six goals after coming to the fore with the current League leaders in the last two years. May need to do even better to challenge for a starting spot in England.
Above information correct at 20.2.96.

SCOTLAND

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: Did not enter
1964: Did not enter
1968: 1st round
1972: 1st round
1980: 1st round
1984: 1st round
1988: 1st round
1992: Finals 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

7.9.95. – Helsinki (Att: 12, 845)
FINLAND 0
SCOTLAND 2 (Shearer 29, Collins 66)
Scotland: Goram – McKimmie, Boyd, McLaren, Hendry, Levein (McCall 78), Walker (Jess 65), McStay, Shearer, McAllister, Collins.

12.10.94. – Glasgow Hampden (Att: 20,885)
SCOTLAND 5 (McGinlay 4, Booth 34, Collins 40, 72, B McKinlay 61)
FAROE ISLANDS 1 (Muller 75)
Scotland: Goram – McKimmie, Boyd, McLaren, Hendry (B McKinlay 58), Levein, Nevin, McStay, McGinlay, Booth (Walker 70), Collins.

16.11.94. – Glasgow (Att: 31,254)
SCOTLAND 1 (Booth 19)
RUSSIA 1 (Radchenko 25)
Scotland: Goram – McKimmie, Boyd, McCall, McLaren, Levein, Booth, B McKinlay (Nevin 83), McGinlay (Spencer 63), McAllister, Collins.

18.12.94. – Athens (Att: 20,000)
GREECE 1 (Apostolakis 18pen)
SCOTLAND 0
Scotland: Goram (Leighton 77) – McKimmie, Boyd, McCall, Hendry, McLaren, McGinlay, B McKinley (Spencer 46), Ferguson, McAllister, Collins.

29.3.95. – Moscow (Att: 27,500)
RUSSIA 0
SCOTLAND 0
Scotland: Leighton, McKimmie, Boyd, McLaren, Hendry, Calderwood, Jackson (Shearer 77), McStay, McGinlay (B McKinlay 83), McAllister, Collins.

26.4.95. – Serravalle (Att: 1,738)
SAN MARINO 0
SCOTLAND 2 (Collins 19, Calderwood 85)
Scotland: Leighton – Calderwood, Boyd, McLaren, Hendry, Jackson, Nevin (B McKinlay 78), Shearer, McGinlay (Spencer 67), McAllister, Collins.

7.6.95. – Toftir (Att: 3,881)
FAROE ISLANDS 0
SCOTLAND 2 (B McKinlay 25, McGinlay 29)
Scotland: Leighton – McKimmie, McKinnon, McLaren, Calderwood, Burley, Jackson, B McKinlay, McGinlay (Gemmill 75), Collins, Shearer (Robertson 86).

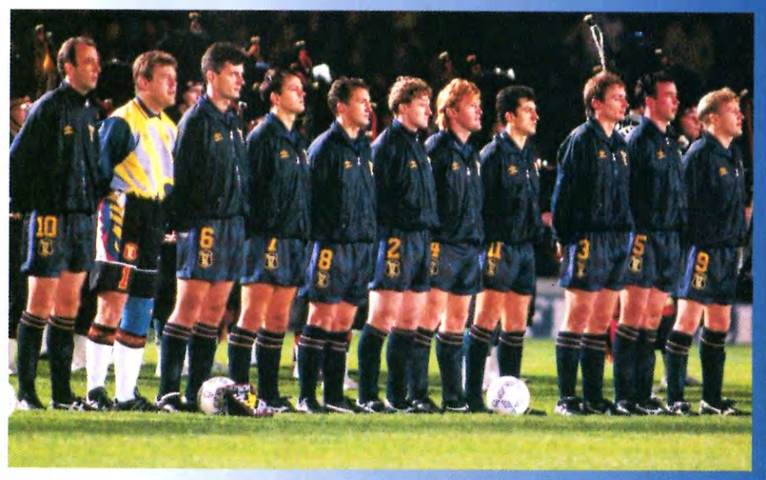
16.8.95. – Glasgow (Att: 34,910)
SCOTLAND 1 (McCoist 72)
GREECE 0
Scotland: Leighton – McKimmie, Boyd, McCall, Calderwood, T McKinlay, Shearer (McCoist 71), Burley, Jackson (Robertson 71), McAllister, Collins.

6.9.95. – Glasgow (Att: 35,505)
SCOTLAND 1 (Booth 10)
FINLAND 0
Scotland: Leighton – McKimmie (T McKinlay 88), Boyd, Calderwood, Hendry, B McKinlay, Spencer (McCoist 74), McLaren, Booth (Jackson 80), McAllister, Collins.

15.11.95. – Glasgow (Att: 30,306)
SCOTLAND 5 (Booth 45, Jess 30, McCoist 49, Nevin 71, Francini og 90)
SAN MARINO 0
Scotland: Leighton – McLaren, Boyd, Calderwood, Hendry, Gemmill, Nevin, Booth (Jackson 65), Jess, McAllister (McCoist 47), Collins (B McKinlay 58).

Final Table – Group 8

	P	W	F	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	10	8	2	0	34	5	26
Scotland	**10**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**19**	**3**	**23**
Greece	10	6	0	4	23	9	18
Finland	10	5	0	5	18	18	15
Faroe Islands	10	2	0	8	10	35	6



Border wars

The clash with the Auld Enemy could overshadow Scottish hopes of making the quarter-finals. By Alan Fairley

THE twinkle in Craig Brown's eye was unmistakable at the Euro 96 draw in Birmingham after Scotland's name had been placed alongside that of neighbours England in Group A.

"I'm delighted we've drawn England," said the Scottish national coach. "It's the game the fans wanted and from Scotland's point of view it gives an extra edge to the tournament."

However, while it is important that the Scots do not allow the impending Wembley clash against the Auld Enemy to dominate their preparations for the championships, it is difficult to ignore the euphoria that has been created by the rekindling of the oldest international fixture in the world.

The Scotland-England at Wembley on June 15 will be the first occasion in which the two countries have met in the final stages of a major tournament.

For Scottish supporters, memories have been recalled of some of the more famous Wembley meetings: the Wizards of 1928, the defeat of the world champions in 1967 and, perhaps most vividly, the Ally McLeod-inspired 2-1 win in 1977, which culminated in the pillaging of nets, goalposts and turf, samples of which were transported over Hadrian's Wall as lasting mementoes of the occasion.

Brown, however, while delighted at being presented with his first-ever opportunity to lead a Scottish team into battle against England, is sufficiently objective to realise that there are two other equally important ties to be played in the first stage, against Holland and Switzerland.

The performance of the Dutch in their qualifying decider against the Republic of Ireland at Anfield, and their subsequent installation as one of the tournament favourites, has been enough to generate an appropriate level of respect, but the Swiss, whom Scotland face at Villa Park on June 18, three days after the Wembley showdown with England, are seen as a side who the Scots can beat.

Prior to the draw, Brown demonstrated remarkable frankness when asked for his ideal first stage opponents. "Denmark, Switzerland and Turkey," he said.

Of these three wishes, only one came true, and Brown will be happy to see his team take the field at Villa Park needing victory against the Swiss to ensure progress to the next round.

His aspirations in this regard were helped when Switzerland's coach Roy Hodgson was sacked only days after the draw was made.

Despite having previously described Englishman Hodgson as a "personal friend", Brown was again surprisingly forthright when he said: "I'm delighted to hear Roy's been sacked – it's great news for Scotland." His comments revealed a ruthless streak, but they also indicated the level of respect which he holds for Hodgson as a compatriot and rival.

The question now for Brown is does he stick by the players who helped the team qualify for England – or does he pick the men in form?

"I'm pretty sure that most of the guys who have taken part in what was a very difficult qualifying group will form the basis of my squad," he says. "But there will be places available for others who I feel are capable of adding quality to the team."

Brown is no doubt referring to the new crop of youngsters who are currently making their mark on the Scottish game: Kevin Harper (Hibernian), Gary Locke (Hearts), Stephen Glass (Aberdeen), Charlie Miller of Rangers and Celtic's Jackie MacNamara. All have been regulars at Under-21 level as well as the first teams of their club sides this season. Promotion to the full squad will be seen as a natural progression in their development.

Another selection question concerns Richard Gough. The Rangers captain found himself surplus to requirements following a much publicised fall-out with Brown's predecessor Andy Roxburgh, but, despite displaying exceptional form in the Rangers defence this season, has been unable to force himself into Brown's plans.

Brown insists that Gough's non-selection is not for personal reasons but refuses to elaborate on what has been one of the most controversial issues of his spell in charge.

'On the field the Scots appear as well prepared as possible given the resources available, but their most potent weapon could be the colourful, vociferous Tartan Army, their supporters, who, following a period of apathy, have now regrouped in numbers and are preparing to transport the Braveheart spirit south of the border'

In goal, Brown must decide between Gough's Ibrox team-mate Andy Goram and veteran Hibernian keeper Jim Leighton.

Goram is widely regarded as Scotland's top goalkeeper but his withdrawal from the squad before last year's international against Greece on the grounds that he was not "mentally attuned" for the game, opened the door for Leighton, who has taken his chance and is currently the man in possession of the No 1 jersey. Brown remains undecided as to which keeper will be preferred but rests content in the knowledge that whatever decision he makes the position will be filled by an experienced, talented professional.

Elsewhere in the side, few surprises are expected. The return to first team action of Everton's Duncan Ferguson after a spell in prison could lead to a place for the tabloid-friendly striker, but Scotland are reasonably well off for front men, having access to players such as John McGinlay, John Spencer, Duncan Shearer, Ally McCoist and John Robertson. Others such as Darren Jackson and Eoin Jess are equally at home in midfield roles and their versatility will ensure that they remain vital components in Brown's tactical strategy.

Brown is most likely to adopt a traditional 4-4-2 line-up *(see diagram page 54)*, although he could opt for a more flexible 3-5-2 formation, perhaps bringing in Colin Calderwood alongside McLaren and Hendry at the back, leaving Burley and Boyd free to support the midfield.

Up front, Scott Booth could also make way for an attacking midfielder such as Eoin Jess or Hibs' Darren Jackson, either of whom could move up to play alongside a target-man striker like McGinlay or Shearer.

At press time, the Scots were scheduled to play three friendlies: a potentially tricky encounter with Denmark on April 24 in Copenhagen will be sandwiched by easier games against Australia (March 27 at Hampden) and the United States (May 26 in, provisionally, New York).

On the field, the Scots appear as well-equipped and as well-prepared as possible given the resources currently available.

Their most potent weapon, however, could be found in the colourful, vociferous shape of the Tartan Army, their supporters, who, following a period of apathy, have now regrouped in numbers and are preparing to transport the Braveheart spirit south of the border once more.

KEY MAN: EOIN JESS

EOIN JESS is at the crossroads of his career, having recently joined English Premiership club Coventry City in a £2milllion transfer deal.

Aberdeen manager Roy Aitken was resigned to losing his talented young midfielder. The player's contract with the Pittodrie club expired this summer and Jess had indicated his intention to further his career in England.

Having spent a large part of last season sidelined through injury, Jess came back into the Aberdeen side when they were facing relegation for the first time in their history. His efforts helped steer the Dons to safety and he has since won a Scottish League Cup-winners medal with the transformed Pittodrie side.

Jess began his career as a striker but was switched by Aitken to a midfield role. The change highlighted a deeper, visionary side to his game and attracted the attention of clubs from England. Ron Atkinson's Coventry were the first in the queue.

Originally targeted by Rangers as a schoolboy, Jess chose to sign for his home town team, Aberdeen, in 1987 and made his full debut for Scotland in a World Cup qualifier against Italy six years later. His international career is expected to progress further this summer.

THE COACH

Craig BROWN
1.7.40.
Has combined successful careers in both football and education. He was a schoolboy, youth and junior international and played club football for Rangers, Dundee – winning the Scottish League title in 1962 – and Falkirk. Knee trouble brought a premature end to his playing career. Brown became a primary school head teacher and then lecturer before returning to football in 1974 as assistant manager at Motherwell. Managed Clyde between 1977 and 1986 before becoming assistant national and Under-21 coach. Succeeded Andy Roxburgh as national team manager and technical director in November 1993.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Andy GORAM
13.4.64. Rangers. 34 caps.
Has lost his place to Jim Leighton in recent times due to injury and much publicised psychological problems. He is, however, expected to be recalled for Euro 96 as a result of his superb form for Rangers of late. Played for Oldham and Hibs before joining Rangers in 1991.

Jim LEIGHTON
24.7.58. Hibernian. 71 caps.
The most-capped goalkeeper in Scotland's history. He has performed well since being recalled to replace Andy Goram and will give Craig Brown a selection problem. Recently conceded seven goals to Rangers in a League game, which could count against him.

Nicky WALKER
29.9.62. Partick Thistle. 1 cap.
Former Leicester City, Motherwell, Rangers and Hearts goalkeeper whose consistent displays during Partick's perennial relegation struggles have helped him achieve international status after 15 years as a professional.

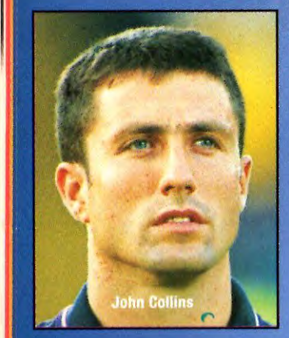
DEFENDERS

Tommy BOYD
24.11.65. Celtic. 31 caps.
Played for Motherwell and Chelsea before joining Celtic. An inspirational figure (he captained Motherwell to their Scottish Cup win in 1991) who can operate on both sides of the park and is equally at home in defence or midfield, thereby displaying a versatility which is ideal for Craig Brown's tactical strategy.

Craig BURLEY
24.9.71. Chelsea (Eng). 5 caps.
A relative international newcomer and an aggressive, hard-tackling defender who displays great commitment, although such qualities are often misinterpreted by referees, leading to doubts about his temperament. Nephew of Ipswich manager George Burley.

Colin CALDERWOOD
20.1.65. Tottenham (Eng). 9 caps (1 goal).
Spent a large part of his career with unfashionable English clubs (Swindon and Mansfield) and was relatively unknown to Scottish supporters until he moved to Tottenham. His performances in the Premiership led to international recognition and he is now a regular in the squad after some impressive displays in the qualifiers.

Colin HENDRY
7.12.65. Blackburn Rovers (Eng). 14 caps (1 goal).
Defensive lynchpin of the Blackburn team who won the English title in 1995, Hendry has emerged in recent years as a dependable and capable central defender. First capped against Estonia in 1993, he is commanding in the air, and a big threat at set pieces. Started with Dundee. Returned to Blackburn after a spell with Man City.


John Collins

Alan McLAREN
4.1.71. Rangers. 24 caps.
Captained Hearts while a teenager and was quickly recognised as an international prospect. Solid and reliable, he joined Rangers in 1994 after being watched by several clubs in England. First appeared for Scotland aged 21 on the 1992 tour of North America.

Stewart McKIMMIE
27.10.62. Aberdeen. 36 caps (1 goal).
Captain of Aberdeen, a highly experienced full-back who is strong in the tackle and likes to get forward. Possessor of a powerful shot and scored the winner in a friendly against Argentina six years ago.

Tosh McKINLAY
3.12.64. Celtic. 2 caps.
After 12 years in the game with Dundee, Hearts and Celtic, McKinlay was finally called up by Brown as cover during an injury crisis. His strengths lie in his tackling, his distribution and his strong forward running.

Midfielders

John COLLINS
31.1.68. Celtic. 29 caps (8 goals).
Despite being unsettled by transfer speculation over the past year, Collins has displayed exemplary form for Celtic this season and has scored some spectacular goals with his left foot, often from dead ball situations. His current contract with Celtic ends this summer and it is expected that his future will be settled prior to Euro 96.

Scot GEMMILL
2.1.71. Nottingham Forest (Eng). 4 caps.
Son of former Scotland captain Archie, and a regular for the Scottish Under-21s before making the breakthrough at full international level last year in the Kirin Cup.

Gary McALLISTER
25.12.64. Leeds United (Eng). 37 caps (4 goals).
Began his career with Motherwell before moving to Leicester City and then Leeds, where his potential was realised. Captained Leeds to the English title in 1992 and, around the same time, established himself as an international. His undisputed leadership qualities are matched by his ability to push forward in search of goals.

Stuart McCALL
10.6.64. Rangers. 31 caps (1 goal).
A tenacious player who made a significant contribution to the Euro 96 qualifying campaign. His ball-winning capabilities complement the creativity of players like McStay and Collins, although he has been troubled with injury for large parts of the current season. Born in Leeds to Scottish parents, McCall played for Bradford City and Everton before joining Rangers in 1991.

Billy McKINLAY
22.4.69. Blackburn Rovers (Eng). 15 caps (4 goals).
A product of Dundee United's legendary youth policy, McKinlay began his international career while with the Tannadice club and made an immediate impact, scoring three goals in his first five games for Scotland. Joined English champions Blackburn last year but has had difficulty in maintaining a first team place.

Paul McSTAY
22.10.64. Celtic. 72 caps (9 goals).
The most capped player in the squad, McStay has been a loyal servant to Celtic since joining them from school in 1981. His international career has spanned a 12-year period and although now in his 30s, he remains in pristine physical condition.

Pat NEVIN
6.9.63. Tranmere Rovers (Eng). 27 caps (5 goals).
Began his career with Clyde in his native Glasgow before moving south to join Chelsea in 1983. Always regarded as a traditional Scottish winger and, as such, has been used rather sparingly at international level since his debut against Romania 10 years ago.

Forwards

Scott BOOTH
16.12.71. Aberdeen. 9 caps (5 goals).
Broke through to the Aberdeen first team around the same time as Eoin Jess and the pair have formed a powerful partnership. Scored vital goals in the qualifying stages for Euro 96 in matches against Russia and Finland, but his progress has been halted by a succession of long-term injuries. He recently regained his place in the Aberdeen forward line and looks certain to continue his international development at Euro 96.

Darren JACKSON
25.7.66. Hibernian. 9 caps.
Began his career with Meadowbank Thistle in his native Edinburgh and had unremarkable spells with both Newcastle United and Dundee United before returning to Scotland's capital in 1992 to join Hibernian. Has developed into a regular international and has shown that he is equally capable of playing up front or in a deeper role as an attacking midfielder.

Eoin JESS
13.12.70. Aberdeen. 10 caps (1 goal).
See profile, previous page.

Ally McCOIST
24.9.62. Rangers. 49 caps (17 goals).
Played for St Johnstone and Sunderland before joining Rangers but it was not until the arrival of Graeme Souness as manager at Ibrox that his full potential was realised. McCoist has scored a number of vital goals for Scotland since gaining his first cap against Holland in 1986 and, earlier this season, broke the longstanding record held by the legendary Bob McPhail to become the highest goalscorer in Rangers' history.

Gary McAllister

John McGINLAY
8.4.64. Bolton Wanderers (Eng). 9 caps (3 goals).
Another late developer at international level, McGinlay was first called up by Craig Brown at the age of 30 and he has proved himself to be an extremely capable performer. Used principally as a target man, his height and strength have been utilised to complement the more delicate skills of his various striking partners.

John ROBERTSON
2.10.64. Hearts of Midlothian. 16 caps (3 goals).
Another late developer, Robertson scored on his debut against Romania, at the age of 27. Since then he has had to be content with his status as a fringe player but is presently playing what he regards as the best football of his career at club level. Robertson has spent all of his career, with the exception of one season, at Hearts and is the 2nd most prolific scorer in the club's history.

Duncan SHEARER
28.8.62. Aberdeen. 7 caps (2 goals).
A native of Fort William, Shearer moved south to England, but was brought back to Scotland four years ago, joining Aberdeen from Blackburn Rovers. A powerful, imposing forward, Shearer's height and strength are his main assets but he is also renowned for his strong running and powerful shooting.

John SPENCER
11.9.70. Chelsea (Eng). 8 caps.
With Rangers since the age of 14, he failed to make the expected impact with the Ibrox club and, after being farmed out to Hong Kong for a season, moved to Chelsea, where he is now enjoying success. His diminutive stature and aggressive penalty box style could make him the ideal striking partner for Shearer or McGinlay. Above information correct at 15.2.96.

SPAIN

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP RECORD
1960: Quarter-finals
1964: Champions
1968: Quarter-finals
1972: 1st round
1976: Quarter-finals
1980: Finals 1st round
1984: Runners-up
1988: Finals 1st round
1992: 1st round

HOW THEY QUALIFIED

7.9.94. – Limassol (Att: 10,000)
CYPRUS 1 (Soteriou 36)
SPAIN 2 (Higueras 15, 25)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Camarasa, Salvador, Guardiola (Caminero 63), Nadal, Hierro, Goikoetxea, Guerrero, Higuera, Amavisca (Ciganda 78), Sergi.

12.10.94. – Skopje (Att: 30,000)
MACEDONIA 0
SPAIN 2 (Salinas 16, 25)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Ferrer, Abelardo, Alkorta, Caminero, Nadal, Hierro (Amavisca 76), Sergi, Luis Enrique, Higuera, Salinas (Pier 65).

16.11.94. – Seville (Att: 38,000)
SPAIN 3 (Nadal 41, Donato 57, Luis Enrique 87)
DENMARK 0
Spain: Zubizarreta – Ferrer, Belsue, Alkorta, Abelardo, Nadal, Luis Enrique, Caminero (Bakero 72), Salinas (Higuera 58), Donato, Sergi.

17.12.94. – Brussels (Att: 21,000)
BELGIUM 1 (Degryse 6)
SPAIN 4 (Hierro 29, Donato 56pen, Julio Salinas 68, Luis Enrique 89)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Abelardo, Alkorta, Nadal, Hierro, Luis Enrique, Guerrero (Salvador 56), Donato, Sergi, Julio Salinas (Goikoetxea 69).

29.3.95. – Seville (Att: 27,000)
SPAIN 1 (Guerrero 24)
BELGIUM 1 (Degryse 26)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Sergi, Abelardo, Nadal, Hierro, Luis Enrique, Guerrero (Higuera 46), Salinas (Pizzi 64), Donato, Amavisca.

26.4.95. – Yerevan (Att: 40,000)
ARMENIA 0
SPAIN 2 (Amavisca 49, Goikoetxea 63)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Otero, Alcorta, Karanca, Nadal, Goikoetxea, Luis Enrique, Pizzi (Salinas 52), Donato (Camarasa 70), Amavisca.

7.6.95. – Seville (Att: 17,000)
SPAIN 1 (Hierro 64pen)
ARMENIA 0
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Aranzabal, Alkorta, Abelardo, Nadal, Hierro, Goikoetxea (Salinas 46), Guerrero (Caminero 78), Luis Enrique, Amavisca.

6.9.95. – Granada (Att: 16,000)
SPAIN 6 (Guerrero 45, Alfonso 51, Pizzi 75, 80, Hierro 78, Caminero 83)
CYPRUS 0
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Aranzabal, Alkorta, Nadal, Hierro, Luis Enrique, Guerrero (Manjarin 80), Alfonso (Pizzi 52), Caminero, Amavisca (Francisco 75).

11.10.95. – Copenhagen (Att: 40,260)
DENMARK 1 (Vilfort 47)
SPAIN 1 (Hierro 17pen)
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Abelardo, Alkorta, Nadal, Sergi, Luis Enrique, Hierro, Caminero (Fran 30), Manjarin (Donato 62), Pizzi (Alfonso 46).

15.11.95. – Elche (Att: 21,350)
SPAIN 3 (Kiko 8, Manjarin 73, Caminero 79)
MACEDONIA 0
Spain: Zubizarreta – Belsue, Sergi, Alkorta, Nadal, Donato, Manjarin, Kiko (Goikoetxea 74), Pizzi (Alfonso 46), Caminero, Amavisca (Ferrer 46).

Final Table – Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	**10**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**25**	**4**	**26**
Denmark	10	6	3	1	19	9	21
Belgium	10	4	3	3	17	13	15
Macedonia	10	1	4	5	9	18	7
Cyprus	10	1	4	5	6	20	7
Armenia	10	1	2	7	5	17	5

Pragmatism first

Javier Clemente's perennial under-achievers can confound the critics, says Graham Turner

SINCE Spain won the European Championship on their own soil way back in 1964, they have struggled to shake off the label of under-achievers which has clung to them for three decades.

To outsiders, the Spaniards remain an enigmatic bunch who have qualified for just about everything except the 1974 World Cup and the 1992 European Championships but, once in the final phase, have produced, as Ernest Hemingway might have put it, *'nada, nada y, pues, nada.'* In less literary parlance, nuffink.

But the old Spain is Different slogan, invented in the 1950s to boost tourism, might be bent slightly to read Clemente is Different. Historians will tell us that the 1994 World Cup was a failure just like all the others. Yet Clemente's Spain had suggested, by the conclusive manner of their 3-0 win over Switzerland to reach the quarter-finals, that they were candidates for the world crown.

Rival coaches began to mutter respectful, if not fearful, comments about them. Then, just when they had Italy against the ropes and went rushing in for the knock-out punch, they let Signori and Baggio catch them with an old one-two and, against all the odds, they were out.

Yet the Spanish public, normally unwilling to celebrate failure, was so impressed by the Stateside performances that thousands went to Barajas airport to give the fallen heroes a standing ovation.

That is the background to the mood of quiet optimism which the Spaniards have been exuding during recent months.

There are powerful reasons for rebutting optimism. Clemente is the first to utter them. The 42-match championship could leave key players gutted and certainly has left him with a minimal preparation schedule: Norway, home and away. Full stop.

The silver – well, silverish – lining is that Clemente's lack of time to work on his own team has left him with plenty of time to work on the opposition. And this is something the wily Basque does very well indeed.

"I don't mind how we do it," he maintains, "but we *have* to beat Bulgaria in our opening match. Then we can maybe take on France with top spot in the group at stake." His aim is to have six points in the bag and take on Romania without the need to rush headlong into their counter-attacking traps.

As usual, Clemente turned a pair of deaf ears to *vox populi* demands for rising superstars Raul Gonzalez and Ivan De la Pena to be included in the Euro 96 party.

"They are very, very good," he agrees, "but I'm not sure they are mature enough to play three games in 10 days at the very highest level. Unless there are serious injury problems, they are more likely to be in Atlanta than Leeds this summer."

He was saying that back in January, which means that he will rely on his tried, trusted, pragmatic and proven players. Much as the critics may dig at him for fielding defensive-looking teams, eight wins and two draws in the Euro 96 qualifiers are impressive credentials.

Clemente's Spain have not always impressed (notably in the 1-1 home draw with Belgium and the 1-0 home win over Armenia) but, unlike Spanish teams of the past, they have consistently obtained results.

Their 25 goals were shared among 14 players – which is why Clemente's team are infuriatingly unpredictable for rival coaches – and the principal question mark is over Juan Antonio Pizzi's ability to replace the veteran Julio Salinas in the role of target man.

At the other end of the team, the evergreen Andoni Zubizarreta has held off all attempts to wrest the goalkeeping gloves from him, not only due to his playing qualities but also on account of his influential presence in the dressing room.

'There are powerful reasons for rebutting the optimism. Javier Clemente is the first to utter them. The 42-match championship could leave key players gutted and has left a minimal preparation schedule: Norway, home and away. Full stop. The silverish lining is that Clemente has plenty of time to work on the opposition. And that is something the wily Basque does very well indeed'

In defence, Clemente's major headache will be managing without the suspended Miguel Angel Nadal (who naively earned himself a red card during the comfortable 3-0 win over Macedonia in the last qualifier) for the crucial matches against Bulgaria and France.

An embarrassment of riches in midfield is spearheaded by Fernando Hierro, top scorer during the qualifiers with four goals, and Jose Luis Perez Caminero, whose disciplinary record over the past two seasons, coupled with memories of three yellow cards in four 1994 World Cup games, casts a shadow over his ball skills and ability to produce goals from next to nothing. Significantly, the industrious Brazilian-born Donato seems likely to oust the ball-playing Josep Guardiola, who has had a wretched season at Barcelona. The signing of Gica Popescu pushed him, firstly, out of his natural pivotal role towards the right-half position, and then to the bench or even the stand.

Yet Clemente loves to confound his critics with apparent contradictions. Santi Canizares, for example, remains the second-string keeper despite his status as understudy to Paco Buyo at Real Madrid. The Barcelona defence, rated among the most permeable in the league, still get in *en bloc*.

What's more, they are going to come face to face with some extremely familiar opponents. Albert Ferrer could be pushed forward to strike some sparks off his former team-mate Hristo Stoichkov and, nine days later, could be asked to perform a similar muzzling job on Gheorghe Hagi, his team-mate at Barça until June 30. Luboslav Penev of Atletico Madrid is likely to be one of seven Bulgarians who have played in Spain, while Romania, in theory, could field a whole side of 'Spaniards' against Spain.

All this will help Clemente and his men during their usual pre-match session dedicated to discussing opponents' weaknesses.

If Spain are high on the ante-post betting, that is largely due to the spectrum of tactical variations which Clemente has at his disposal.

Goalkeepers apart, nearly all the whole squad can operate in more than one position, making it difficult for rival coaches, even with the Spanish team-sheet in their hands, to predict individual roles and formations, which can begin with either a flat back four or two markers and a sweeper.

Bearing in mind the high percentage of gold winners from the 1992 Olympics and the nucleus of 1994 World Cup performers, Spain can travel to Leeds with a squad who have been working together for almost four years, even though Clemente has used 60 players during that time. Many of his experiments – especially in attack – have failed and the backbone of the side is formed by not-so-old faithfuls.

"These days everybody does the homework on opponents so thoroughly that it has become difficult for European nations to surprise each other tactically," he says. "But I feel that we can perhaps spring a few more surprises than some other nations. We are not as strong in attack as some other countries, so we have to compensate for this in other departments. and there I really do feel that we have enough quality to bear comparison with anybody."

A good each-way bet?

KEY MAN: FERNANDO HIERRO

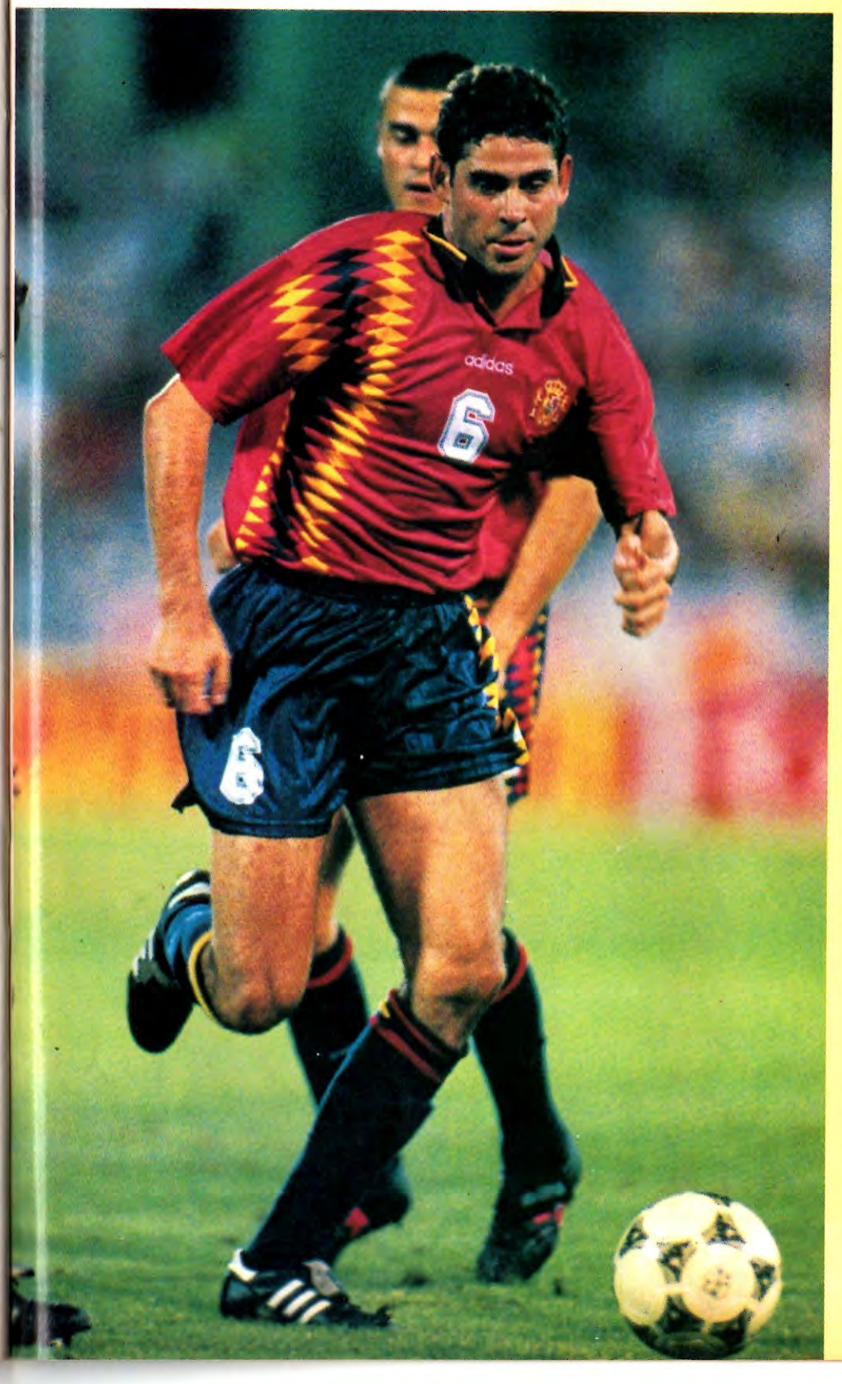
AN odd statement, you might think. He's certainly not a Stoichkov, a Hagi, a Cantona or a Klinsmann. Even the Spanish squad can turn up some more obvious star material, such as teenage idol Julen Guerrero. But Clemente's side is all about pragmatism and this is where Hierro comes into his own.

Nothing flashy. Honest endeavour, but high-class honesty. No strident statements to the media, just measured common sense.

Ask anybody at Real Madrid or in the Spanish camp which player they most appreciate having on their side, and the unanimous answer is Fernando Hierro. He is the dependable anchor man either in defence or in the middle of the park. During this season, Jorge Valdano used him at the back, Arsenio Iglesias further forward.

Born in Velez Malaga, he left the sunny South for the chilly Castilian uplands of Valladolid and joined Real Madrid in 1989, a year after his elder brother, Manolo, had signed and failed for Barcelona.

Within weeks he had been called into the national side and Luis Suarez, having taken him to Italia 90, was criticised for not fielding him. Clemente has no such qualms about Hierro, a tall, powerful player who tackles hard, surges forward and shoots to kill.



THE COACH

Javier CLEMENTE
12.3.50.
It is uncharitable to call a 46-year-old a wily old fox. But 'Javi' Clemente, forced out of active football at 24 after only 47 League games for Athletic Bilbao, turned to coaching at an uncommonly tender age and has two decades of experience to back natural gifts for man-management and detecting the weak spots in enemy armour. After spells at local sides Arenas of Getxo and Basconia, he joined the Athletic coaching staff in 1978 and took the decisive career-building step by leading the club to a League-Cup double in 1983 followed by another title a year later. But he was hounded out in 1986 and moved to Barcelona, where he led poor relations Espanyol to the 1988 UEFA Cup Final, losing on penalties to Bayer Leverkusen. Clemente then went off the rails at Jesus Gil's Atletico Madrid in the 1989-90 season and seemed to have lost his way during second helpings at both Athletic and Espanyol. But in 1992 the national team job blew new life into this wry, controversial character, who has taken Spain up the FIFA rankings with a pragmatic style unpopular with the *dilettanti*, who prefer the flourishes of yesteryear.

THE PLAYERS

GOALKEEPERS

Andoni ZUBIZARRETA Urreta
23.10.61. Valencia. 105 caps.
Spain's keeper during the 1986, 1990 and 1994 World Cups. Signed for Barcelona from Athletic Bilbao in 1986 for £750,000 by Terry Venables. Discarded by Johan Cruyff after Barça's 4-0 defeat by Milan in the 1994 Champions Cup Final. Clemente, the manager who blooded 'Zubi' in Bilbao, has blocked all attempts to give the gloves to Madrid-based keepers.

Jose Santiago CANIZARES Ruiz
18.2.69. Real Madrid. 9 caps.
Deputy to Toni during the 1992 Olympics and to Paco Buyo since joining Real the same year. Spain's hero in the World Cup qualifier against Denmark, going on when Zubi was sent off and making some crucial saves.

TONI Jimenez Sistachs
12.10.70. Espanyol. Uncapped.
Spain's keeper during the 1992 gold-medal Olympic campaign but ejected from Barcelona by Cruyff after a spell on loan to Second Division Figueras. Has blossomed since joining Espanyol in 1993.

DEFENDERS

ABELARDO Fernandez Artuna
19.3.70. Barcelona. 24 caps (2 goals).
Signed from Sporting Gijon for £1.8m in 1994 but has suffered in Cruyff's rickety defence. Brought through Sporting's football school at Mareo and a key figure in the 1992 Olympic side. Dangerous at set pieces.

Rafael ALKORTA Martinez
16.9.68. Real Madrid. 35 caps.
Signed from Athletic Bilbao in 1993 but only sporadically in Real's starting line-up. Strong central defender, more skilful than his physique suggests.

Agustin ARANZABAL Alkorta
15.3.73. Real Sociedad. 2 caps.
A superbly skilful left-back who broke into the Real Sociedad side during the 1993-94 season and made his international debut in June 1995.

Alberto BELSURE Arias
2.3.68. Real Zaragoza. 11 caps.
Product of Zaragoza's youth scheme, loaned to Endesa Andorra in the 86-87 season, and now rated as the best right-sided wing-back in Spain.

Francisco CAMARASA Castellar
27.9.67. Valencia. 14 caps.
One of the fringe members of the squad, a central defender who made his international debut in September 1993. A product of the Valencia youth scheme, and a dependable, experienced campaigner, even though he contributes little in attack.

Albert FERRER Llopis
6.6.70. Barcelona. 27 caps.
Played on the right-side of midfield in Spain's 1992 Olympic side under Clemente's gaze and, although regularly fielded at right-back by Cruyff at Barça, often retains the same position in the national side.

Aitor KARANKA de la Hoz
18.9.73. Athletic Bilbao. 1 cap.

Miguel Angel NADAL Homar
28.7.66. Barcelona. 29 caps (2 goals).
Clemente pulled all available strings in a bid to reduce the ban which will keep him out of the first two Euro 96 fixtures. This strong central defender cum midfielder is the sort of all-rounder Clemente swears by. His robust play earned him a red card and a two-match ban during the 1994 World Cup finals.

SERGI Barjuan Esclusa
28.12.71. Barcelona. 18 caps (1 goal).
Thrown into the Barcelona side for the Champions League match against Galatasaray in Turkey in 1993 and a first-team regular ever since. Scored on international debut in February 1994 and starred in the USA World Cup.

Salvador Gonzalez Marco, VORO
9.10.63. Deportivo La Coruna. 9 caps.

MIDFIELDERS

Jose Luis Perez CAMINERO
8.11.67. Atletico Madrid. 18 caps (7 goals).
Rejected by Real Madrid, where his route was blocked by Michel. Returned to the capital when Jesus Gil signed him for £900,000 in 1993 from Real Valladolid. Has played as winger, sweeper, central defender and in all sectors of the midfield. Clemente gave him his international debut in September 1993. His unreliable temperament is his biggest problem: a one-match ban marred an otherwise memorable 1994 World Cup.

DONATO Gama da Silva
30.12.62. Deportivo La Coruna. 10 caps (3 goals).
Took his time in getting into pro football with America in his native Rio de Janeiro and was signed by Atletico Madrid on the basis of a spectacular Spanish tour in 1988 while on loan to Vasco da Gama. Requested Spanish nationality, and the utility defender/midfielder was signed by Deportivo in 1993. Made his international debut at 31, scoring Spain's second goal during the 3-0 win over Denmark in November 1994.

Francisco Gonzalez Perez, FRAN
14.7.69. Deportivo La Coruna. 8 caps.
Popular acclaim has failed to convince Clemente, even though he is the natural successor to 'Txiki' Begiristain on the left side of midfield. His tally of caps since an international debut in January 1993 says it all. Supremely gifted and a natural goalscorer, but – according to Clemente – he "has not captured my message".

Jon Andoni GOIKOETXEA
21.10.65. Athletic Bilbao. 36 caps (4 goals).
Started as a left-winger with Osasuna. After a £1m sale to Barcelona in 1988 he spent two years on loan to Real Sociedad. Cruyff reconverted him to a wing-back and then a right-winger, the position he usually occupies in the national team. Started every match in the 1994 World Cup finals and scored the vital goal against Germany. Sold to Bilbao in 1994, exchanged for Xabier Eskurza and £500,000.

Josep GUARDIOLA Sala
18.1.71. Barcelona. 14 caps (2 goals).
Influential midfielder frozen out by the arrival of Gica Popescu at Barcelona this season and, as a result, now on the fringe of the national squad.

Julen Guerrero

Julen GUERRERO Lopez
7.1.74. Athletic Bilbao. 21 caps (7 goals).
Spain's second-youngest international of all time was pencilled into the superstar frame for the 1994 World Cup, but Clemente used him only for 45 minutes against Korea and 90 minutes against Bolivia. Made his international debut in January 1993, but has not played a full game since September 1994. Has resisted multi-million offers to leave Bilbao.

Fernando Ruiz HIERRO
23.3.68. Real Madrid. 40 caps. 11 goals.
See profile, previous page.

LUIS ENRIQUE Martinez Garcia
8.5.70. Real Madrid. 21 caps (3 goals).
A product of Sporting Gijon's football school at Mareo, signed by Real for £1m in 1991 and one of Spain's 1992 Olympic gold-winners. Having started as a left-winger, has been used as wing-back or, during Michel's long-term absence, right-side midfielder. Key player during Spain's 1994 World Cup campaign.

FORWARDS

ALFONSO Perez Munoz
26.9.72. Real Betis. 10 caps (2 goals).
Fringe candidate after losing a whole season at Real Madrid due a cruciate ligament injury and then controversially transferred to Betis last August.

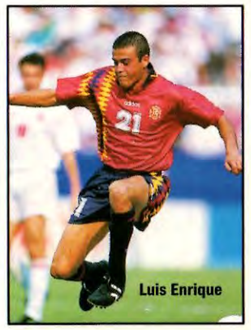
Jose Emilio AMAVISCA Garate
19.6.71. Real Madrid. 10 caps (1 goal).
Left-sided forward ever-present in Real's 1994-95 title-winning side, but injury has kept him out this season. Could return in time for the summer.

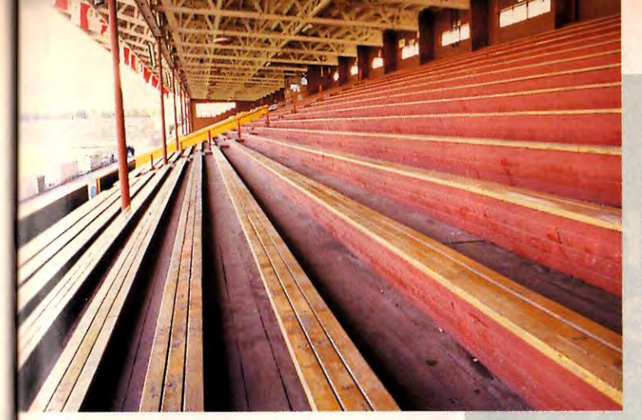
Julio SALINAS Fernandez
11.9.62. Sporting Gijon. 54 caps (22 goals).
Clumsy-looking veteran still in squad due to a lack of viable alternatives. Played in the 1986, 1990 and 1994 World Cups. Joined Deportivo when discarded by Barça in 1994 and left the club last summer rather than compete for a place with Bebeto, Radchenko and Manjarin.

Francisco Narvaez Machon KIKO
26.4.72. Atletico Madrid. 7 caps (2 goals).
Top scorer in Spain's 1992 Olympic side and two-goal hero of the Final against Poland. Called into the A team in 1992 but discarded a year later because, as Clemente put it, he had "failed to add hard work and commitment to natural talent". Sold by Cadiz to Atletico Madrid in 1993, and has blossomed under Raddy Antic.

Javier MANJARIN Pereda
31.12.69. Deportivo La Coruna. 5 caps (1 goal).
Product of Sporting Gijon's school at Mareo and promoted to the first team in 1989. Was in the 1992 Olympic squad but did not play an active part. Moved to Deportivo in 1993 for £1m and made his international debut during the 6-0 win over Cyprus in September 1995.

Juan Antonio PIZZI Torroja
7.6.68. CD Tenerife. 10 caps. 4 goals.
Born in Las Parejas in the Argentinian province of Santa Fe and made his debut for Rosario Central in 1988 before moving to Mexico in 1990. Signed for Tenerife in 1991 for £700,000 in 1991. Since then has averaged 15 goals a season but failed miserably on loan to Valencia in 1993-94. Granted Spanish nationality, making his national team debut in November 1994. Above information correct at 15.2.96.


Luis Enrique



1929, losing to Ujpesti Dozsa, and again winners in the penultimate 1938 competition, 4-2 against Ferencvaros.

The trophy, which looked like a flattened version of the FA Cup, was resurrected in the 1950s, with Czechoslovak participation. By then, the glory days were past, as were those of Slavia and Sparta.

Communism brought with it a need to destroy the bourgeois clubs and the two Prague clubs became the object of derision by the state sporting associations.

Resources were denied, factory-sponsored teams were the beneficiaries of ministries and state corporations, and even the names of proud Slavia and Sparta disappeared. The former was for a time Dynamo, the latter Spartak Sokolovo.

Relegation, non-qualification for Europe and no help with ground improvements were among the results. Players were delegated to the Central Army House Football Club, which became Dukla Praha. A stadium was carved out of a hillside in the military district of the capital and by the time of the political change 40 years on the Juliska was still incomplete. Now the despised Dukla, who used to call up for military service any player they fancied, have all but folded.

Despite all that was done to bring down their clubs, Sparts and Slavists remained true. They still flocked to home games, notably to the annual 'Big S Derbies' or when it seemed likely the all-powerful Dukla could be beaten at home.

What might the two clubs have become in European terms but for their hounding by politics? What they achieved in the 1930s was way ahead of such as Ajax, Anderlecht, or even Real and Barcelona at European level.

Now perhaps they can begin to catch up, at least in the garden of Eden, where Slavia are due to become a well-managed limited company improving a famous old stadium.

CLUB FOCUS

SK Slavia Praha
Vladivostocka 2
100 00 Praha 10

Founded: May 31, 1895
Stadium: Dr Vacka (usually *V Edenu* – at Eden)
Capacity: prior to reconstruction 42,000 – currently 16,320, while rebuilding.
Colours: Red and white halves with red star on white half, white shorts, red and white socks.
Chairman: Ing. Vladimir Leska
Coach: Dr Frantisek Cipro
Czechoslovak League: nine titles (1925, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1947).
European Cup Record:
Champions Cup – no participation
Cup-winners Cup – 1 campaign (1975)
Fairs/UEFA Cup – 8 campaigns (1968, 1969, 1977, 1978, 1986, 1993, 1994, 1995).
Record appearances: Frantisek Planicka – 1,442, including 73 caps for Czechoslovakia (1921-1938).
Record goalscorer: Josef Bican – 447 goals in Czechoslovak League (1937-1956).

TEAM FOCUS: SLAVIA PRAGUE

THE COACH

Frantisek Cipro (12.4.47)
Born in Jihlava and grew up in Ceske Budejovice where he started as a youth with Dynamo. After a spell with another Southern Bohemian club, Dukla Tabor, he moved to VCHZ Pardubice and finally made his First Division debut with Tj Gottwaldov. From 1971 to 1980 he played for Slavia, before becoming player-manager of Tj Jilove in the Fourth Division. He then had a similar role across the border with Austria Gmund. On his return home in 1988 Cipro was in charge in Brno for a year and then had two seasons with Al Limassol in Cyprus. On return to Bohemia he took over a Fourth Division club, Tj Blsany, the home town team of current FA President Frankisek Chvalovsky. The village club of 400 souls made it to Division Two under Cipro. Then he moved to Eden as Sport Director, becoming Chief Coach last autumn.

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

Jan STEJSKAL (29.12.72)
Agile and large. Spent three years at QPR after a successful career at Sparta and in the national team. Joined Slavia at the beginning of last season. Lost his place to Sparta's Kouba at the beginning of the Euro 96 qualifiers. 256 League appearances in Czech football. Ever-present last term.
Jaromir BLAZEK (15.1.62)
Lost his place on the return of Stejskal. But with almost a hundred first-team appearances, his time will come again. Can be spectacular.

DEFENDERS

Tomas HUNAL (1.6.73)
One of the younger brigade at Eden. Has made 25 appearances but has to be content with a reserve role for the moment. Nonetheless a capable deputy if required. 12 appearances and twice a 'sub' last season.
Lubos KOZEL (16.3.73)
Played 16 games in 1994/95, scoring once. Has one international cap but does not seem to figure very high on national coach Dusan Uhrin's list of possibles at the moment. Has to battle for regular first-team football rather than a place among the reserves.
Martin PENICKA (10.12.69)
Had notched up 173 League matches and 22 goals when the return round began in late February. An experienced defender playing in tandem with the better known Suchoparek. Unlucky not to have had any international call-ups. Now in his sixth year with Slavia. Joined the 'Eden Reds' from Liberec after starting as a 20-year old with Red Star Cheb.
Jan SUCHOPAREK (23.9.69)
Had 25 caps when the season began and partners Kaiserslautern's Miro Kadlec at the back in the national team. Can play any role in defence and has scored 30 League goals in a seven-year career which started in the Czechoslavak League at the Juliska with Dukla. Moved to Vrsovice in the summer of 1991. Quick and tough in the tackle as well as able to get forward in attack. A key man in the UEFA Cup campaign. Played for Dukla in the Cup-winners Cup.
Martin HYSKY (26.9.75)
Twenty-year-old who is gradually establishing himself as a regular alongside his mentors Suchoparek and Penicka. Gained European experience in the success over Lens. As Slavia went into the second half of 1995-96 Hysky had played 51 times in the League and notched four goals.

MIDFIELDERS

Radek BEJUL (29.8.72)
Shared the record of appearances in the Czech Republic League when the season began and has made 143 League starts, scoring 24 goals from midfield. Still only 23 and has hardly missed a game since his debut in 1990-91. Has four caps. Four goals and an ever-present last term.
Jindrich JIRASEK (9.9.73)
Made three appearances last season and has made the same number this term. Usually on the reserve bench. No-one could have a more Czech name!
Ondrej KRISTOFIK (10.9.66)
A Slovak and long a pillar in the Slovan Bratislava midfield. Made his debut for the Telehne Pole club six seasons ago and won six caps for the Czechoslovak selection, scoring once. An alternative to Pavel Novotny in the midfield. After Stejskal the oldest member of the squad. Made seven appearances for the Slovak national team last season but missed the first ever official 'A' friendly against his colleagues from the Czech Republic.
Jiri LERCH (17.10.71)
Defensive midfielder who started in Southern Bohemia with Ceske Budejovice in 1990-91 when that club was in Division 2. Moved after a season to Dukla, then back to the South for a full season in Division 1 before Slavia came in for him. Now in national coach Uhrin's notebook and a member of the national squad. A possible deputy for Latal at Euro 96. Hardly ever absent since arriving in Vrsovice in the summer of 1992.
Pavel NOVOTNY (14.9.73)
Another of the youthful Slavia players making a mark this season. In his third year at Eden. Scored five goals from midfield in 1994-95 in 21 outings and four games as a sub. Goalscoring has rather been shared round since Kuka left for the Bundesliga so coach Cipro will not mind him improving on his strike rate so far. Has scored 18 in a total of 80 League games. Made his 100th League appearance in February.
Daniel SMEJKAL (28.8.70)
Started in top soccer at Pilsen with Viktoria in 1991. Moved to Prague last year. Has 10 caps but is not currently in Uhrin's first 24 for June. A regular in the Slavia midfield on the left-hand side.
Karel POBORSKY (30.3.72)
A lively attacking midfielder. Has averaged a goal every three games from midfield since joining the Vrsovice 'Reds'. A current international with 11 caps and should make the party for England. Might break into Uhrin's starting line-up if he has a good second half of the season.

FORWARDS

Tomas KLINKA (24.4.77)
Still to make his debut. Might receive a chance if injuries take their toll this spring.
Vladimir SMICER (24.5.73)
Had a brief six-minute outing in the vital tie with Luxembourg which clinched the Republic's place in England. It was his second cap. Joined the Slavia ranks in 1992. Six goals in the autumn half-season. Partners Vagner up front. *Gol* magazine's 1993-94 Player of the Year.
Jiri STAJNER (27.5.76)
Like Klinka a future prospect, with just four League games under his belt. Yet to score a goal at top level, and plays much of his football with Sparta 'B' in a feeder League in Prague.
Robert VAGNER (15.5.74)
Has one cap and may have an outside chance of making the Euro 96 squad. Has the equivalent of two full League seasons' games under his belt, in which he has scored 14 times.
Jiri VAVRA (6.3.75)
Joined Slavia in 1993 as an 18-year-old. Has since played 57 games and scored 7 goals, gaining one cap but not a regular place in the League team. Competition for places in the Slavia front line is strong and he may have to be content with the bench this spring.

Europe

Bulgaria

Penev will pick from 36

THE second half of the season got under way with leaders Levski comfortable home winners over ailing Lok Plovdiv, who could be heading for relegation trouble.

Cross-town rivals Slavia retained second spot by taking the points from visiting Dobrudzha, who avoided the drop by two points last spring but so far this season have been able to maintain a mid-table placing.

Neftochimik, who had been challenging for a UEFA Cup place in the autumn, came unstuck in Varna. Spartak's Georgiev, who managed only one goal in 1994-95, added one to his total to lead the hot-shot list with 15.

At the foot of the table things already look grim for Leks Lovech and Shumen, who have just 10 points each and little chance of escape.

On the international front, Dimitar Penev has extended his pool of possibles for Euro 96 to 36. Goalkeeper is still a problem position and a fourth, Plamen Nikolov of Levski, has been added to the squad. He will be one of three Sofia-based keepers challenging 85-cap former team captain Borislav Mikhailov, who still has played only a few games for Reading in England.

Apart from the friendly against England at Wembley on March 27, the warm-up programme is taking shape slowly. Burgas, however, may stage one of two encounters just before Euro 96 kicks off. Macedonia are likely opponents there on May 28. The other will be in Sofia on June 2 when the United Arab Emirates visit.

Penev should have his strongest team available for the Wembley fixture, with the possible exception of Hamburg's Hubchev. Dartilov, who did not impress in the final qualifying game in Berlin, is in the extended pool of players and may receive another chance. Of the 36 possibles, 20 are performing abroad, and the veterans can be expected to be given the responsibility for plotting Bulgaria's first-ever victory against England. The countries have met five times since 1962.

BOB VAUGHAN

Croatia

Yet another reshuffle

The League structure is up for review once again

FIRST there were 12 teams in the First Division. A year later there were 16. Then 18. Then 16 again. Now we are back to 12. And the format for next season will remain undecided until after the play-offs.

Few people are satisfied with the situation and yet another idea is likely to be brought in, with 10 teams in the top group, 16 in the second, and three third sections consisting of amateurs.

The leading clubs have been busy strengthening their squads, with Croatia Zagreb the most active in the market. They have signed Daniel Saric from Sporting Gijon, Tomislav Rukavina from FC Zagreb, Danijel Stefulj from Varteks and Edin Mujcin from Marsonia.

Hajduk Split have recruited Valladolid's outstanding playmaker, Aljosa Asanovic, plus Niko Ceko from FC Zagreb. The sales of Ceko and Rukavina were forced on FC Zagreb because they needed money to meet unpaid bills, including gas, electricity and phone.

Varteks have replaced Stefulj with an Argentinian, Diego Goyaga, from Bolivian club Blooming. Goyago looks very much like his countryman Claudio Cannigia. If he plays as well, nobody will complain.

Ivica Vastic, who has dual nationality, has been lost to Croatia. He is in outstanding form for Sturm Graz and has opted to play for the Austrian national side.

ZRADVKO REIC

Back home . . . Hajduk Split's Aljosa Asanovic

Romania

Cup won but chances lost

Iordanescu's national side triumphed in Thailand but missed some key players

ROMANIA duly won the King's Cup in Bangkok by beating Denmark after the hosts and Finland had played off for third place.

Iordanescu's second eleven proved stronger than Moller-Nielsen's 'stiffs', also deprived of several foreign-based players. Two first-half goals by Gabriel Popescu – not the foreign-based star Gica, who was not released by Barcelona – were enough. The Danes pulled one back in the last minute.

What Iordanescu may have gleaned is difficult to know, but perhaps he would have been better off at home sorting our rather more than the one friendly arranged to date, with the United Arab Emirates in Bucharest on June 3.

A faction in the FRF, with vice-president Mircea Angelescu to the fore, takes a dim view of such meagre fare and feels Romania has missed the boat, possible contracts for games having been lost.

Perhaps, too, Iordanescu should have been checking on the form and fitness of key players abroad. Hagi has been out of the Barça side since a row with manager Johann Cruyff, Dumitrescu has not been playing due to work permit problems over his move from Spurs to West Ham, and Panduru is in a clinch with the Benfica management.

Veteran Belodedici has been out of action for six months and is now with Villareal in Spain's Second Division, so he, too, must be very doubtful for Euro 96.

The FA has settled on Redworth Hall in County Durham as its headquarters for the Group matches. They just need some practice games now!

BOB VAUGHAN

Not missed . . . Barcelona's Gica Popescu

Poland

Stachurski makes an awful start

NEW COACH Wladyslaw Stachurski's spell in charge of the Polish national squad got off to a terrible start.

His team – admittedly weakened by the absence of players with Western European clubs and those of Legia Warsaw – lost 5-0 to Japan in the Carlsberg Cup in Hong Kong. The Legia contingent stayed behind to prepare for their Champions Cup quarter-final against Panathinaikos.

At home, Legia led the table after the first stage, although they were knocked out of the Cup, 2-1 by Second Division Ruch Chorzow. Meanwhile, Legia coach, Pawel Janas, will also be coaching the Olympic squad preparing for Sydney 2000 after the end of this season.

Olimpia Poznan and Sokol Pniewy of the First Division have both fallen on hard times, and decided that the only way to stay in business is to accept voluntary relegation. They will be replaced by Lechia Gdansk of the Third Division and GKS Tycny of the Fourth, both having agreed new sponsorship deals as a result of their unexpected promotion.

Lechia have also signed Dariusz Dziekanowski. At the start of the 1980s 'Jackie' was regarded as Poland's most talented player, and though he has not played for six months and is now 33, he claims: "With my strength, skill and experience I'm still fit enough to play in Poland."

Another former international, Zbigniew Boniek, has joined the Polish FA board as an adviser to the chairman, Marian Dziurowicz.

DARIUSZ KUROWSKI

Hungary

Rebel Detari may quit

Sixty-cap veteran may move into management

NOT MUCH apart from League fare was on the programme for Hungarian fans as games resumed in the face of adverse weather.

However, Croatia and Italy, who were in the same Euro 96 qualifying group, have sought out the Magyars for friendlies.

The match against Croatia is scheduled for April 16 at a venue still to be fixed, although Zagreb is the most likely. Hungary will welcome Italy on June 1, having played another friendly, against England at Wembley.

Last season Hungary played eight, winning only twice, and this term they lost their concluding Euro 96 qualifiers against Switzerland and Turkey.

Lajos Detari, winner of over 60 caps, has been with Swiss team Xamax Neuchatel until recently. He had previously had spells at Eintracht Frankfurt, Olympiakos, Bologna, Ancona and Genoa, after Juventus failed to take up an option on him.

When he wanted to leave earlier this season, Xamax manager Gilbert Gress refused to put him on the transfer list, but Detari has now gone home to his original club, Kispest-Honved, and begun training.

He has already played in an indoor competition for Honved, but FIFA have confirmed he is still bound to his Swiss employers. If he cannot play, he may take up his father-in-law Imre Komora's offer to be Honved's general manager.

Meanwhile, researchers have been looking at the reason for football's decline in Hungary. Children appear interested in other things these days, despite the fact that the country produced 'The Golden Team' four decades ago. This autumn marks the 40th anniversary of the break-up of that side in the wake of Soviet intervention. Only Puskas, Grosics, Buzanszki, Czibor and Hidegkuti live to tell the tale.

BOB VAUGHAN

Czech Republic

Sparta hit trouble

The champions' financial problems have been compounded by poor results on the pitch

WHILE the CMFS delegation, the main Football Association officers, were setting out for the UEFA 'Workshop' in London, the League programme was resuming, though some matches scheduled in round 16 were victims of the weather.

In Vrosovice, Slavia had been due to play Sigma Olomouc following their 3-0 win in Hradec Karlove, in a game postponed from the autumn and which they wanted to get out of the way before the UEFA Cup matches with Roma were upon them.

Full points put Slavia five ahead of joint fourth Sparta, who started their spring campaign badly with defeats in Pilsen and Ceske Budejovice. Now coach Vlastimil Petrzela has problems with lack of punch and with defenders Jiri Novotny and Tomas Votava unavailable for respective reasons of discipline and injury.

The defeat at CSKA Budejovice, the tiny ground in Southern Bohemia, included the first penalty awarded against Sparta since the beginning of season 1994/95.

Slavia, the leaders, went into March with a game in hand on their city rivals. The second 'Big Derby' is on March 22, two months before the League seasons ends.

The CMFS have settled on headquarters in Preston for the Euro 96 Group games. Warm-up games will be played with Turkey in Ostrava on March 26 or 27, against the Republic of Ireland in Prague on April 24, and provisionally at home to Belarus on May 8. There a further game in prospect with the Austrians in Salzburg.

BOB VAUGHAN

Russia

Weight watcher . . . Millwall's Sergei Yuran

Poor pitches cause problems

Frozen fields have caused havoc with fixtures at the start of the new season

THE fifth Russian League championship started amidst complaints about the poor quality of the pitches.

While those in the south of the country look more like potato fields, the northern stadiums bring back images from historical movies in which Russian warriors fight the invaders on frozen lakes. Some of the pitches now have heating, which melts the ice and turns them into potato fields, too.

The tournament had an early start due to the Russian Football Council's decision to enlarge the Premier Division by two teams to 18, lower than the UEFA-recommended limit of 20, but still too high for Russia.

Long distances, poor transportation standards and the bad economic situation turn the tournament into a real ordeal. For example, Yekaterinburg from Siberia cross half the country on the way to Kalingingrad on the Baltic coast, first flying from Asia to Europe and then over two neighbouring countries, Byelorussia and Lithuania, on the way.

Ironically it was the poorer provincial clubs who won the vote on the enlargement of the League, in spite of the strong protests by Moscow teams. Only seven or eight of the 18 have chances in the fight for medals and European places.

The biggest aspiration of the rest is to avoid elimination, which is easier to do with more teams taking part.

Oleg Romantsev, the former Spartak manager who left to concentrate on national team preparations for Euro 96, has criticised Sergei Yuran and Vasili Kulkov (now with Millwall).

According to the Russian manager, Yuran is evidently on the decline, while Kulkov has been gaining kilograms in London.

"Vasili came to the training camp in Malta visibly overweight," Romantsev said. "Both are unfit for the Russian national team."

VICTOR GUSEV

Ecuador

Pacho's dream

Colombian coach Francisco Maturana, now in charge of Ecuador's national team, talks exclusively to WORLD SOCCER

FRANCISCO 'PACHO' MATURANA has a new dream – to take Ecuador to their first World Cup finals.

After a brief spell in Spain with Atletico Madrid, the coach who took Colombia to the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States returned to South America. As the national coach, he is hoping to transform the footballing fortunes of Ecuador.

He took time out from his new task to talk to *WORLD SOCCER*'s Les Dickens.

WORLD SOCCER: You are well-known as a manager all over the world. Why did you pick Ecuador for your latest football adventure?
FRANCISCO MATURANA: I accepted Ecuador's invitation because I want to qualify for another World Cup. I have been lucky enough to be at two World Cups [1990 and 1994]; they were great experiences which I now want to repeat with Ecuador.

What are your goals for Ecuador?
To qualify for France 98 and I also want to build a team that is accepted by everyone here.

What's your programme for the next 12 months?
We start the year with a tour of the Middle East and Asia. This will give us a chance to get to know each other and work on the physical aspects of our game. After the tour we hope to play one or two friendlies against top opposition which will hopefully establish us at international level.

Before the 1994 World Cup, a lot of people had high hopes for Colombia. What happened?
We were confident with our results and all the work we had done, but in the tournament our lack of experience and history terrorised us. We don't need to look for other reasons. It's simple. Colombia were not prepared. We qualified well and obtained good results in our friendlies, but the moment we lost our first game at USA 94 we couldn't take it. It hit us too hard. We fell apart and were not capable of winning the game that followed.

So it wasn't anything that happened before the finals?
No. Everything was fine when we arrived. We were full of hope but we just didn't have a team that did the right things when needed. Our opponents waited and counter-attacked. We took our game to them because we thought our football was better. We tried to run the games and they just waited and they won. It was after this game that the media pressure really mounted. This created chaos and confusion and we could never fit the pieces together after that first game.

Rene Higuita has always been in your teams, when available. Why?
Higuita has always impressed me, be it playing for Nacional in the pre-Olympic team or at international level. I always considered him to be the best. That was before he suffered his personal downfall. After he left prison he wasn't the best and Cordova was playing better. When he was at his best he was always included.

What do you think of his scorpion kick?
It's part of Latin American folklore. We love to see things like this – it's part of the spectacle. For Europeans, the name of the game is winning. He had practised the kick two or three years ago and made a commercial doing it. In Colombia it has caused problems with kids who copied it suffering broken bones. So I don't think it has a future in football.

Will you ever run the Colombian national team again?
In football you never know what's going to happen. At the moment I don't want to be distracted from my present job. After that, who knows?

It could be said that you reached an all-time low in 1994 after the World Cup, Andres Escobar and your time in Spain. How did you see it?
I do not see it like that. I have been a coach for 10 years but I am still relatively young. I've been a champion at club level and of South America. I've worked in Europe three times and qualified for the World Cup twice. I've been voted the best coach in South America and have been in charge of a rest-of-the-world team. It seems as though I've done a lot in 10 years of coaching. I've always used a saying. I think it's Shakespeare: "If you learn from your defeats then you have never lost." That's the way I look at things. To do an internal analysis to find out where I went wrong, to not make the same mistakes. I'm not saying that I'll never lose again. I feel that I'm a better person. I've been through difficult times and now I'm looking towards the future. If I look back I'll just lose speed.

Ecuador will play some of their World Cup qualifying games at altitude. Any reason for this?
We aren't sure yet. We think we will play at sea level and at altitude. If CONMEBOL lets us play in two different locations we will play in Quito and Guayaquil. The important thing is to have a good team. When you think of Bolivia and talk about altitude you are taking a lot away from them as they play good football. So if you have a good team you can use the natural conditions to your advantage. I want to use everything to make Ecuador better. I've been given assurances that I'll have the players during the whole year. They will play for their clubs at weekends and spend the weekdays with me at altitude. Playing at altitude

New gold dream . . . Francisco Maturana

'I've always used a saying. I think it's Shakespeare: "If you learn from your defeats then you have never lost." That's the way I look at things'

does have its advantages. The other team has to decide when to travel to acclimatise. It gives them psychological and physical worries. We are forming a team that can play anywhere.

Do you think the decision to outlaw La Paz [as a World Cup qualifying venue] was the right one?
Maybe I'm not the right person to say. If it is based on medical data then you have to look at factors other than just altitude, like playing games in 42 degree heat or playing in the summer. You must look at what is best for football.

How do you rate Colombian players abroad? It seems only Asprilla's been a hit?
Arrigo Sacchi's assistant once said that Colombian players are like a plate of spaghetti – one strand at a time is not much but all the strands together is a real delight.

What's your view of the Bosman case?
He's a brave man who confronted a whole group who thought they were above everyone with their formidable legal backing. From a human point of view it's a real achievement but it's going to cause a lot of problems.

Describe Jesus Gil . . .
He is an extraordinary person. I always looked at him like a father figure – a happy-go-lucky type. He's intelligent and has fought all the way to reach the top. He does things for attention. He told me people think he's crazy but he's not, he knows what he's doing. He has a constant battle with the media. Real Madrid will get two or three pages coverage in the papers and Atletico one. When he says something they get three. I like him as a person, he's a winner. But as a football director, I don't think much of him. You need patience, you need continuity. He's too explosive.

What are the differences between South America and Europe?
South America is ahead of Europe in terms of World and World Club Cups. Europe feeds on South American players. Some like slow football, others direct. I like direct European football. It's practical and orderly. Before I used to get great enjoyment out of a nutmeg, flick or backheel, but now I like the collectiveness and I favour the European style. I don't like to see people walking. I like speed.

FIFA recently elected its player of the year. How did you vote?
We all had to choose three players. I voted for Weah first – I admire him. Maldini – I vote for him every year. He has something special. He is the real football prototype. He's decent and always gives his best. My third choice was Litmanen. He's part of Ajax and they had to have a representative. At the same time Klinsmann seems a good choice. His way is another way of saying goal.

What about your future?
It doesn't exist. The immediate future is our first game against Peru. Let's hope the result will give us a future.

Brazil

The shortest long break ever

Brian Homewood on another season and another League format

TWENTY eight precious days. That was all Brazilians were given between the end of the 1995 football season and the start of the 1996 term.

Last season finally came to a close on December 23 with the national team's 3-1 victory over Colombia in a friendly in Manaus. But it did not last long. On January 20, the circus began all over again with the Torneio Inicio, a typically bizarre curtainraiser to the Sao Paulo championship.

This gave no time to build up the new season and no time for fans to get used to the new-look teams in a country where the turnover of players and managers is huge and the number of competitions bewildering.

January is at the height of Brazil's summer, when the weather is either intolerably hot or pitches have been made unplayable by torrential tropical downpours, which can strike at any time.

Once again this year, the public has been faced with yet more new competitions, each one more incomprehensible than the last. The authorities in Rio de Janeiro have surpassed themselves by preceding the state championship with a city championship, featuring eight teams (Flamengo, Fluminense, Vasco da Gama, Botafogo, America, Bangu, Olaria and Madureira). The state championship, which begins in March, features 12 teams, making it virtually a repeat of the city championship.

The Sao Paulo federation, meanwhile, made its state competition bigger than the national championships of many countries – even though it is supposed to last only five months. As a result, many major clubs were forced to play during the carnival period, when football is the last thing on people's minds.

Sao Paulo, Botafogo and Atletico Mineiro also had to contend with the so-called Conmebol Champions Cup, involving all the previous winners of the South American Conmebol Cup, which in its four years of existence has become one of the least prestigious tournaments in the history of world football.

The Inicio tournament was a one-day knockout competition involving the 16 teams in the Sao Paulo championship. Each game lasted 20 minutes, with the number of corners deciding the winners of drawn matches. Most of the big sides sent reserve teams.

It would make much more sense to wait until the carnival is out of the way and begin the season in March, giving the public a breather. But the only lines the Brazilian directors are capable of thinking along are the ones that claim more football equals more money from television.

When the Sao Paulo championship began, Palmeiras got off to a flying start, beating Ferroviaria 6-1 and Novorizontino 7-1 in their first two games. By press time, they led the first stage of the competition, two points clear of Corinthians. The top two teams in the first stage (in which the 16 teams play each other once) and the second stage (ditto) go into the final stage, with the usual complications arising if one team appears in the top two in both stages.

Edmundo, on loan to Corinthians after his miserable spell at Flamengo, began well with five goals in five games, but then got himself into trouble again by being sent off for hitting an opponent in the 2-2 draw with Santos.

The man who grabbed the most headlines was Corinthians' Marcelinho Carioca, thanks to a magical goal against Santos in which he flicked the ball over the head of a defender and then scored with a volley. Even Pele, whose son Edinho was the beaten Santos goalkeeper, got up and applauded.

Santos themselves, after their excellent performance in last year's Brazilian championship, got off to a stuttering start, with two wins in five games, and appeared to be paying for the idiotic sacking of manager Cabralzinho in the close season, reported in last month's issue.

Meanwhile, there was a scandal in Brasilia over the Olympic side's warm-up match against Bulgaria, which they won 2-0. The Eastern Europeans had been billed by promoters as the Bulgarian Olympic side, enabling them to fill the stadium.

It later transpired that 'Bulgaria' had been nothing more than a team from Slavia Sofia and the public had been conned. The CBF shrugged its shoulders at the whole sleazy affair.

Miracle goal . . . Corinthians' Marcelinho

Argentina

Debunking the myths

Argentina's leading clubs are not what they used to be, says Eric Weil

ARGENTINA's soccer clubs – which are really all-sports clubs and many of them huge – are supposed to be the country's pride and the envy of many other countries. But it is something of a myth!

Today, many of them are decaying, short of members and heavily in debt. More people are using one-sport commercial sports clubs near their homes, instead of paying a monthly fee and playing any of 25 sports with an all-sports club. This, as well as crowd violence, has contributed to the decline.

Soccer is still by far the country's favourite sport, but more and more people are becoming armchair fans, as matches are screened on TV virtually every evening. It is also no longer a sport to which one can take the whole family. Argentina's inept laws do little about hooliganism.

It is also the most expensive soccer to watch if you compare average earnings to ticket prices. The minimum price for a First Division game is $10, which is frequently increased for more important games. Seats cost from $70-80. Conditions at stadiums are also very poor.

Ticket sales published weekly by the FA show that some 40,000 tickets are sold at big games, but only 200-300 at some minor First Division matches. You will, however, see far bigger crowds at stadiums because club members get in free at their home stadium and club committee members dish out free tickets to their friends and the club's hooligan supporters gang (although they will tell you they don't).

Even the biggest clubs are losing support. The most popular, River Plate, had 77,000 members in 1980 and only 35,000 today. Current champions Velez Sarsfield had 66,000 in 1980 and have half that number today. But members come and go according to the soccer team's success. Popular Boca Juniors had 25,000 in 1980; the figure doubled the following year when Diego Maradona played for them in his heyday and they won the championship. Now their membership is down to 32,000.

The one exception is Independiente, from the industrial town of Avellaneda, divided from Buenos Aires only by a river. In the past five years their membership has increased from 60,000 to 80,000, but their success is due to the fact that the membership fee is by far the lowest ($10 a month and a little extra for each sport played).

Empty terraces . . . sparse crowds at Velez Sarsfield

Apart from the fall in membership, clubs are facing higher demands under new tax laws, but bad management by elected committee members, often inept, corrupt and power-hungry, is the main reason for indebtedness.

A statistic published some time ago showed that River Plate, who have won the most titles, had the biggest debts, some $15million, followed by Racing Club with $11million and Boca Juniors with $10million – all three popular big clubs – while in fourth place are modest Argentinos Juniors, who had only 4,000 members, and owed $7million. It must have been due to sheer bad management as they had sold players for $20million in the previous 10 years.

In Britain these clubs would have been declared bankrupt and closed down. In Argentina, however, they are protected by popular support and weak laws. Although club officials will often tell you that soccer is their leading loss maker, they depend heavily on the game for advertising revenue, TV rights and as a membership draw.

Argentinian FA president, Julio Grondona, says every club owes the FA money and thinks that the only solution is for the professional soccer sections of clubs to form private companies. Argentinos Juniors tried this when a TV company took them over and moved them to another province for one season, but it failed. Deportivo Espanol wanted to do it, but the members turned the idea down flat. It has been forgotten about for the moment.

Of course, clubs still earn good money by selling players abroad, but with agents now involved in most of the deals, they do not make as much money as they should.

Last year it was estimated that there were 324 Argentinian players abroad. So what happens to the domestic transfer market?

At the start of the current season 142 players moved between the 20 top division clubs, but 84.5 per cent of them went on loan. Of these, 40 per cent had bought out their own contracts from cash-strapped clubs and were lending themselves to other clubs.

Meanwhile, 33 per cent are owned by firms, soccer agents or other individuals who rent them out to clubs. This is not permitted by the FA, but deals are covered by apparently legal contracts. Diego Maradona and Claudio Caniggia, both playing for Boca Juniors, are owned by a multi-media company. The exception are current champions, Velez Sarsfield, who own all their 158 players on loan.

This avoids transfer fees, the 15 per cent player's share, and the FA levy in a cash-strapped market.

IN BRIEF

ECUADOR's Espoli, a club sponsored by the police, are the only newcomers in this year's Libertadores Cup, in which the top two teams of each of the 10 South American countries take part along with last year's champions, Gremio of Brazil. Action starts on March 13.

Twenty clubs play in five groups of four in home and away matches. The top three of each group advance to the second round knockout stage together with last year's champions.

The first round groups are composed as follows:

Group 1: Olimpia & Cerro Porteno (Paraguay), Barcelona & Espoli (Ecuador).
Group 2: Defensor Sporting & Penarol (Uruguay), Sporting Cristal & Universitario (Peru).
Group 3: Atletico Junior & America (Colombia), San Jose & Guabira (Bolivia).
Group 4: Botafogo & Corinthians (Brazil), Universidad de Chile & Universidad Catolica (Chile).
Group 5: River Plate & San Lorenzo (Argentina), Caracas FC & Minerven (Venezuela).

Group play is scheduled to end on April 17, the second round will be played on May 1 and 8, the third round on May 15 and 22, semifinals on May 29 and June 12 and finals on June 19 and 26.

Some clubs may have to give up international players at times as World Cup qualifying action starts in April, but that will depend on each individual FA.

AS WORLD CUP matches approach, discussions continue on whether Bolivia will be allowed to play their home games in La Paz which is 3,400 metres above sea level. FIFA washed its hands of the issue by leaving it up to the South American Confederation (CONMEBOL). The latter said no, but Bolivia has continued to put pressure on all and sundry, even at diplomatic level, to get the decision reversed.

THERE were few changes in personnel for the second half of the season in Colombia.

Deportivo Cali, winners of the opening championship, are second in the closing championship, giving them a nine-point lead in the overall standings, from which eight advance to the final round.

Most successful of the newcomers is Argentinian midfielder Ricardo Lunari, on a six-month loan from Chile's Universidad Catolica to Millonarios.

Veteran Carlos Valderrama, 34, said goodbye to Colombian soccer, before joining Major League Soccer in the US, at Atletico Junior's 2-2 draw with America. After the match, he handed his number 10 shirt to team-mate Osvaldo McKenzie, 23, his most likely successor.

Another veteran, Rene Higuita, plans to sue the government for loss of earnings for the time he spent in jail for helping to free a kidnap victim.

BRAZIL won the beach soccer 'world championship' – played on Rio de Janeiro's beaches for the second time – for the second year running with a 3-0 final victory over Uruguay. Italy took third place with a 4-3 victory over the USA.

Temporary stands were erected on Copacabana Beach and 67,000 spectators saw the final.

MERCOSUR, a trading union composed of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil, could follow the European Union's ruling in the Bosman case and allow clubs in these four countries to field players from any of the four countries and they would not be counted as foreigners.

ERIC WEIL

MEN IN THE NEWS

DIEGO MARADONA was negotiating at press time to take over the soccer team of Sudamerica, a small Uruguayan sports club which has been doing quite well recently but is heavily in debt. He has been at odds with Boca Juniors' new president, car magnate Mauricio Macri, and has said he is only staying with Boca because of the fans.

XAVIER AZKARGORTA, Chile's Spanish national team coach, followed the example of Argentinian national coach Daniel Passarella by telling his players to cut off their long hair and stop wearing earrings. FA officials watered this down by explaining that the use of earrings on the field could be dangerous and that short hair was only a suggestion. But Real Madrid's Ivan Zamorano, whom Colo Colo wanted to bring back to Chile, said he had no intention of cutting his hair.

EDMUNDO Alves de Souza, the unruly Flamengo striker, will stand trial on three charges of manslaughter and could face up to 12 years in prison if convicted as a result of a December traffic accident in which three people died. He is accused of driving at almost 100km (over 60mph) in the city of Radio de Janeiro when the accident happened. This capped a disastrous year for the 24-year-old Edmundo, who has been loaned by his club to Corinthians in Sao Paulo.

LUIS CUBILLA, the Uruguayan coach of Olimpia, the Paraguayan champions, has left claiming he has not been paid a bonus which was promised to him for winning the title.

SOCRATES, the former Brazilian international, has signed to coach Ecuador's Liga Universitaria de Quito.

JOSE BASUALDO, the Argentinian international midfielde featured in last month's *WORLD SOCCER* has completed his transfer from Velez Sarsfield to Boca Juniors for £700,000.

OTHER LEADING TRANSFERS:

NESTOR GOROSITO and **ALBERTO ACOSTA**, Argentinian international midfielder and striker respectively, were transferred by Universidad Catolica (Chile) to Yokohama Marinos for almost £5million.

Brazilian **CARECA** (Hamilton De Souza), 27, lately of Sporting Lisbon, to Alianza Lima (Peru).

CATE, Brazilian forward, 22, from Sao Paulo to Universidad Catolica (Chile) for £140,000.

ALBEIRO USURIAGA, Colombian international striker, from Independiente (Argentina) to Barcelona (Ecuador) on loan.

DANIEL GARNERO, Argentinian midfielder, from Independiente to Universidad de Chile for £700,000.

GERARDO MARTINO, 33, former Argentinian international midfielder, from Newell's Old Boys to O'Higgins of Chile.

ERIC WEIL

Mexico

Managers playing musical chairs

Under fire . . . national coach Milutinovic

ELEVEN of the 20 clubs in the Mexican First Division have changed managers since the season began.

The latest to go is Guillermo Mendizabal, a former Mexican international, who has lost his job at Leon after a run of five games without a win.

Despite the wholesale changes, 12 teams still have a chance of getting into the championship play-offs. They include Atletico Celaya, heading their group after being promoted last season, with Emilio Butragueno still playing and now acting as assistant to the manager, Juan Manuel Alvares, as well.

Celaya went top after America were beaten by Guadalajara in a classic match that broke all attendance records at the Azteca Stadium. America have won only once in 10 starts and Marcelo Bielsa could be the next manager to move.

He is a temperamental individual, and the club are owned by Televisa, the TV station where officials do not look kindly on losers.

Toros Neza, like Celaya, are doing surprisingly well. They started badly but have lost only one of their last 13 games under manager Alberto Guerra, who succeeded Carlos Reynoso.

Relegation this season will be based on results over three years, which means that manager Victor Vucetich and his Tigres UNL squad could be in an odd position before long, reaching the play-offs and fighting against the drop at the same time.

Vucetich has won the championship twice in recent seasons, with Leon in 1992 and Tecos UAG in 1994.

Cruz Azul, probably the best team in Mexico just now, are to build a new stadium, seating 40,000, in Mexico City, and will leave the Azteca next year. This will leave only two Televisa teams, America and Necaxa, playing there.

On the international scene, Mexico lost 2-1 in a friendly in Chile, after dominating the play. Bora Milutinovic's experimental selection was widely criticised, despite his earlier success in winning the CONCACAF Gold Cup."Results do not matter," he says. "Only qualifying for the World Cup matters."

CARLOS RAMIREZ

Bermuda

FOOTBALL's bumpy ride in Bermuda continued when the national team withdrew from qualifying for France 98. They had been due to meet Trinidad & Tobago after being given a bye to the second round.

Many are wondering if the game can survive such a blow and believe that the optimism generated from USA 94 qualifying has all but disappeared.

Vasco Da Gama top the league table, leading North Village Red Devils by five points after 12 matches. Cory Hill, Earl Richardson and Irving Burgess have combined to score 29 of Vasco's 37 goals.

Guatemala

SACACHISPAS have raced to the top of the second phase table, leading Municipal by a single point after three matches.

Comunicaciones, first-phase winners by 11 points over Aurora, have started slowly. They have scored only one goal in their three matches to date.

Municipal did show some firepower, however, when they crushed Xelaju 6-0. Juan Carlos Plata registered three goals in that match.

Honduras

A CLOSE race for the top spot has left five teams within five points of each other. But the fans have not responded to the competition. Attendances at most matches have struggled to reach 2,000.

The poor performances of traditional power Real Espana have not helped. They currently find themselves perilously close to the relegation zone.

In what is known as the 'national classic', Olimpia and Marathon drew 2-2 in front of 10,921 fans at the National Stadium.

Motagua's Geovanni Castro tops the scoring chart with nine goals.

Costa Rica

ALAJUELA consolidated their position at the top of the league with a resounding 5-1 win over bottom-of-the-table Guanacaste.

The home team took a surprising lead through Kenneth Baltodano, only five minutes into the match. Five different players accounted for the Alajuela goals, with Froylan Ledezma registering his 11th strike of the season in the 64th minute.

Surprisingly Herediano find themselves four points behind Alajuela, but may be facing bad news shortly. A dispute with Honduran club Marathon over Nicolas Suazo may force the return of the international striker to his former club. Suazo's talent, as well as his popularity, will be sorely missed. He has scored 11 goals this season and is a huge favourite with the fans.

El Salvador

DESPITE a five-point lead, FAS have been inconsistent of late. Consecutive defeats to struggling El Roble (2-1) and second-placed Aguila (3-1) have raised questions about their chances of retaining the title.

Nagging injuries to US international Hugo Perez, Erber Burgos, Vladimir Cuvias, Guillermo Rivera and Saul Romano have slowed what was a considerable offensive force.

Aguila's victory confirmed their threat to take over the FAS throne. Midfielder Waldir Guerra has spurred Aguila, raising hopes that the club can obtain a record 12th title.

Luis Angel Firpo's top two players – striker Raul Diaz Arce and midfielder Mauricio Cienfuegos – have signed with Major League Soccer in the United States. Diaz Arce (23 goals this season) will play with DC United, while Cienfuegos, who raised many eyebrows with his outstanding play at the CONCACAF Gold Cup, will play for Los Angeles Galaxy.

SCOTT GLEBA

Japan

The party's over

THE J.LEAGUE finally faced up to reality in 1995 and pulled through the experience pretty well.

Chairman Saburo Kawabuchi had said the second year would be decisive. The football boom swept on into the third, and it was only last year that progress started to look less triumphant.

On the bright side, aggregate attendances did rise for the third consecutive season as the league again expanded, but the average fell to early 1993 levels even with expanded seating capacity.

By the end of last year's Nicos Series, blocks of empty seats were visible at some grounds. Most strikingly, powerhouse Verdy Kawasaki never filled their enlarged 21,000 capacity Todoroki stadium after its re-opening.

TV ratings also were way down from the 20 or more per cent figures of 1993, to slightly over six per cent. Even the second match of the J.League Suntory Championship drew only 11 per cent.

Part of the reason was the new baseball boom. There even has been speculation, not borne out in fact, that some TV stations might start pulling out of football.

Faced by these pressures, the J.League started a moderate scaling down. Only two big-name foreign teams have been invited for pre-season friendlies this year: Vasco Da Gama to play Nagoya Grampus Eight, and Penarol for a match with Urawa Reds.

A financial squeeze seems to have started at several clubs, with some top Japanese players finding that they cannot command the salaries they did two years ago. That said, the remuneration is still extremely generous compared with what they could get overseas.

There also are fewer big-name foreign signings this year, though partly because so many foreign stars are in Japan already. The old J.League could still put together a handy Brazil national team.

As the hype fades, it is clear that a lot has been achieved. The average attendance for the 1995 Nicos Series was 17,120, upwards of five times the typical gate in the old Japan Soccer League.

Crowd trouble erupted briefly last year, culminating in a brawl between fans of Kashiwa Reysol and Gamba Osaka, but there has been no hint of a repetition.

The friendly, family atmosphere of J.League football comfortably weathered its first storm.

On the field, Japan are now undefeated in Asia for over a year and are far and away Asia's top team in the FIFA rankings. The youth teams did creditably at the FIFA Under-17 and Under-20 championships last year, and the Olympic team also look pretty good, though they are not through to Atlanta yet.

As for the J.League, it is clearly Asia's number one, which could not have been said about the old Japan Soccer League.

EIGHT of the 16 J.League teams have appointed new managers. They include two Japanese, Hidehiko Shimizu at Avispa Fukuoka and Yasuhiko Okudera at JEF United, but the trend against Japanese continues.

Eight of the J.League's first 10 teams started 1993 under Japanese managers. The number fell to eight out of 12 at the start of 1994, four out of 14 in 1995, and now three out of 16.

GAMBA OSAKA's new Croatian manager, Josip Kruze, has signed another compatriot. He is 31-year-old Mladen Mladenovic from Austrian champions Casino Salzburg.

Cerezo Osaka have signed midfielder Sergio Manoel and striker Narciso from Botafogo. Kashiwa Reysol have gone to Palmeiras for their two new Brazilians, Antonio Carlos and Edilson.

Bellmare Hiratsuka have signed Paulinho from Cruzeiro, and midfielder Alexandre has gone to Kyoto Sanga from Sao Paulo, and striker Toninho returns to Shimizu S-Pulse now that his loan to Urawa Reds has expired. Jubilo Iwata have taken former Japan national team striker Nobuhiro Takeda on loan from Verdy Kawasaki.

MIKE PLASTOW & MICHI ISHIJIMA

AVERAGE J.LEAGUE ATTENDANCES 1993-5

	1993	1994	1995
Suntory	16,875	19,679	16,724
Nicos	19,077	19,517	17,120
Average	17,976	19,598	16,922

AGGREGATE J.LEAGUE ATTENDANCES 1993-5

	1993	1994	1995
Suntory	1,518,801	2,597,599	3,043,768
Nicos	1,716,949	2,576,218	3,115,923
Total	3,235,750	5,173,817	6,159,691

CHINA

FA goes for 12, not 14

PLANS to extend the Chinese First Division have been dropped, despite 80 per cent of delegates at a meeting voting in favour of the idea.

The Chinese FA staged what was called a National Football Work Meeting to discuss the game's future, but decided to ignore popular opinion and keep a 12-club league instead of going for 14.

According to the existing 10-year plan for football, the league will be extended to 14 clubs before 1997, and if that idea remains in force then there will be no relegation this year and two more teams will come in.

Liaoning are the biggest victims of the non-extension, and now must play in the Second Division. Although China Central Television will continue to support them, the number of live transmissions is being cut from 22 to 11.

Some new sponsors have been found, but the plan to build a 'dream team' seems certain to be postponed. The CFA is keen to encourage local loyalty, as shown by the introduction of a new rule preventing clubs from offering accommodation and census registration when trying to sign players. Census registration plays an important role in China, deciding where most of the people must live and what jobs they do.

Last year, the first in which transfers were permitted, there were 52 deals, all involving players from the poorer north of the country going to the wealthier south, and often involving census registration and the provision of a flat or living quarters.

Controversy over transfers continues, particularly the regulation that prohibits the sale of a player unless he has reached the age of 28. Now that rule will not apply if the CFA thinks a move 'would benefit Chinese football in general'.

So if a European or South American club were to want a Chinese player under 28, the move could go ahead: clubs from rival Eastern nations such as Japan, Malaysia and Hong Kong would not be allowed to deal. Not surprisingly, there is considerable debate about the changes.

Another rule change means that goals will no longer be used to settle relegation issues. If two or more clubs are level on points, a home-and-away play-off system will come into operation.

Li Hu'en, who was replaced by Zheng Zhongxue as coach at Jilin three months ago, has now been reappointed. Zhongxue has been given a new role, with the title of 'team leader'.

Another coach, Jia Xiuquan, has lost his job after two years at August First – to the man he replaced, Liu Guojiang. Xiuquan, who played for Gamba Osaka in the J.League's first season in Japan, has become coach to a new club, Shanxi, in the Third Division.

Newly-promoted Shenzhen also have a new coach – Zhou Sui-an, formerly with Guangzhou.

ZHENG MING

IN BRIEF

Bahrain

THE TOP division in Bahrain, the Mumtaz, was taking on a clearly divided appearance after only seven games. The top six clubs had 13 points or better, while the bottom six had only seven or worse.

Al Vehda led Bahrain Club on goal difference, both having 17 points, with the third unbeaten team, Budaiya, two points behind. Champions Muharraq were fourth, on 14.

Hong Kong

ALL TEN First Division teams, fed up with falling standards and alleged mismanagement by the FA, have threatened to break away and form their own league. They also announced that they will pull their players from the national team which Hong Kong is preparing for the Asian Championship qualifying rounds.

One sore point for the teams is that most of them are losing large sums of money. Hong Kong football cannot live on the paltry gate receipts alone and depends heavily on sponsorship deals.

One of the most explosive matches seen in the territory for years, the clash between South China and Uhlsport Rangers, ended with three players sent off and punch ups on the pitch, in the tunnel and between fans and Rangers players and officials.

Pandemonium broke out after South China scored a last-minute goal and Bosnian striker Alen Bajkusa picked the ball from the net for a quick restart only to be tripped by a Rangers player. He then retaliated, preipitating the brawl. Rovers won 2-0.

Nottingham Forest's Neil Webb, unable to get first-team football in England, has arrived for a month with Instant Dict.

Hong Kong's premier competition, the senior shield,went to South China 2-1. Mike Duxbury's own goal proved decisive.

India

VETERAN INDIAN striker I.M. Vijayan helped JCT Mills to retain the Federation Cup, the most prestigious tournament staged by the All-India Football Federation.

JCT – Jagajith Cotton Textile Mills, based in Phagwara, Punjab – reached the semi-final despite losing 2-1 to Indian Bank (Madras) in the qualifying competition. They then reversed that score against the Bank, and beat East Bengal (Calcutta) 4-1 on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the semi-final.

East Bengal beat Kerala Police in their semi-final, with Indian Footballer of the Year Beichung Butia scoring the only goal in extra time.

Victory gave JCT a place in the Asian Club Championship.

Iran

TEHRAN GIANTS, Pirouzi, won the league title after 30 games, finishing six points clear of Bahman. On the last day, international striker, Ali Daii, scored twice for Pirouzi to steer them to a 3-1 win over Esteghlal of Ahvaz.

In the Iranian Cup, Ararat booked themselves a semi-final place against Bargh after eliminating Zobahan of Isfahan on the away goals rule. In the other semi-final, Malavan face the favourites, Esteghlal of Tehran.

The Iranian Football Federation are set to appoint the German coach Otto Fistter as the new national coach.

He will replace the well-respected Hassan Habibi, who failed to take the Olympic team to the second round of the Asian qualifiers.

The first task of the new coach will be to guide Iran through an Asian Nations Cup qualifying group which also includes Oman, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Jordan

HEAVY SNOW caused the game between reigning champions Al Wahadat and Sahab in Amman to be abandoned in the 80th minute, with no score. Al Wahadat won the fixture 2-0 three days later, to reduce the lead of Al Ramtha to two points.

Kuwait

AL-ARABI's 1-0 victory over Al Qadisiyah shot them six points clear at the top after 10 games.

Kyrgyzstan

KANT OIL won their second successive title after finishing a point ahead of AIK. Semetei won the Cup after beating Oynamo 2-0 in the Final.

Lebanon

TERRY YORATH's Lebanon national team are in commanding form after their 2-1 home win against Slovakia. In his first match, Lebanon beat Kazakhstan 2-1. In the second, they Cyprus 1-0.

Yorath is already a hit in the country, and he looks likely to be retained for the forthcoming World Cup campaign.

Al Ansar missed two penalty kicks but were too strong for Homentmen, eventually beating them 2-0 to increase their lead over SAFA to a staggering 16 points, at the end of round 19, with only seven games left.

Wartan Ghazarian of Homentmen, who scored the winner against Cyprus, netted five times against Riyadha Wal Adab to bring his total to 16 goals in 19 games. He is the League's top scorer and Player of the Month.

Malaysia

NATIONAL COACH Claude le Roy has turned down a new contract and returned home to France after his team's poor performance in the SEA Games. Former Johar state coach Wan Jamak, 38, has replaced him. Zairean striker Techiaeya Patrin has joined Perak.

Nepal

MENAG MARSAYNGDI won the King's Birthday Cup, beating last year's champions, Rahmatganj MFS of Bangladesh, 3-2 on penalties in the final.

Oman

FIVE consecutive defeats were enough for relegation-bound Al Ahly to dismiss Brazilian coach Paulo. Other casualties include Egyptian Ahmed Fathi of Al Suwaiq and Sudanese Amin Zaki of Al Khaboura. Champions Sur are still top despite losing a 13-match unbeaten run when they lost 2-1 to Bustane.

Qatar

THE NATIONAL team struggled to beat Yemen in a friendly warm-up game in Doha. The only goal was scored in the 77th minute, by Adel Al-Mulla.

Al Arabi claimed three valuable points with a 3-1 win over Al Wakra and now lead them by five points after nine rounds.

Singapore

THAI international midfielder Tawan Siripan has joined S–League club Tampines Rovers. Saad Abbas, banned last year for his involvement in match-fixing, is back in the country and running a nightclub.

Tajikistan

PAMIR have regained their League title with 67 points, ahead of Istravshan on 52 points.

Turkmenistan

NATIONAL COACH Bairam Durdyiev is hoping that Russian clubs will release players for the forthcoming Asian Cup qualifying tournament.

The exiles include Dmitri Nezhelev and Dmitri Khomukha, who play for Zenith St. Petersburg, Sergei Agashkov with Torpedo Moscow, and Andrei Martynov at Shinnik Yaroslavl.

All will be needed if Turkmenistan are to make progress at the expense of their group rivals, Kuwait and Lebanon.

The champions, Kopetdag of Ashkhabad, have been using two foreigners, for the first time. They are Iraqi internationals Khatibi and Mokhammadi, both 25 years of age.

United Arab Emirates

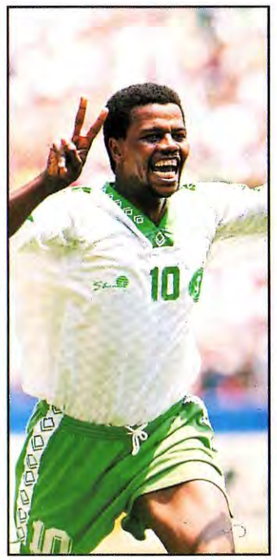
LEADERS SHARJAH SC were held to a 2-2 home draw by champions Al Shabab in the clash of the big-city giants. After 14 rounds, Sharjah head the table with 27 points, from Al Wasl (25) and Al Nasr (23).

Tomislav Ivic has announced a 24-player list to take part in his build-up to the 1996 Asian Cup finals, due to be held in the UAE in December. The list includes six survivors from the 1990 World Cup in Italy: forwards Adnan Al-Talyani and Zoheir Bakhit, keepers Mohsen Musabbah and Adel Anas, and defenders Ibrahim Meer and Abdulrahman Al-Haddad.

Correspondents: MOHAMED CHBARO, AZAM MAHMOOD, AIDAN PAYNE, BHASI MAL PARAMBA, TAI WAI CHEUNG, KAVEH AGAH, VLADIMIR KALINKOVICH

Saudi Arabia

Al-Owairan banned for a year



THE Arab world's best-known player, Saeed Al-Owairan *(left)*, **has been banned from soccer for a year – without any money.**

He cannot play for either his country, Saudi Arabia, or his club, Al Shabab. His contract has been cancelled, and he cannot travel abroad while the ban continues.

Al-Owairan made a worldwide impact during the 1994 World Cup in the United States, scoring a magnificent individual goal against Belgium. He was voted Arab Player of the Year, and lucrative sponsorship deals poured in. As they did, so Owairan's commitment to the game became weaker and weaker. Since the World Cup he has scored only twice in 16 internationals, and has been sent home from a club tournament in Egypt. His involvement with various people who have no direct interest in soccer has caused much debate, and his career seems to be in chaos.

Eventually the authorities decided to act. And not just any ordinary authority: the Saudi FA president is Prince Faisal, son of King Fahd. The Saudi royal family take a great interest in football – national coach Jorge was sacked in 1993 after ignoring a suggestion from Prince Faisal – and their word is law. Owairan's ban is a direct result of royal intervention, and he remains suspended pending further discussions between the royals and the game's legislators.

There have been other dramatic developments, with three foreign coaches losing their jobs because of poor results. Champions Al Nasr parted company with Frenchman Jean Fernandez, German Heinz Schmidt was sacked by Al Qadsiyah, and Brazilian Jose Faulo was fired by Al Nasr.

Ivorian Michel Bassole scored eight goals in the first 11 games and took Al Ittifaq of Dammam to the top of the table, for the first time in five years. They have 23 points, two ahead of Al Ahly and three ahead of another Jeddah club, Ittihad.

MOHAMED CHBARO

Melbourne malaise

Paul Moon on the Knights who may have had their day

DOUBLE winners Melbourne Knights, having lost their two most influential players, the free-scoring Mark Viduka and defender Steve Horvat, to Croatia Zagreb and Hajduk Split respectively, looked extremely vulnerable as the 1995-96 season kicked off.

The subsequent resignation of coach Mirko Bazic, who cited homesickness, health problems and disputes with the national soccer administrators, has compounded the Knights' problems.

Viduka left a huge void. By claiming a clean sweep of Australia's major individual honours – Player of the Year, National League top goalscorer and Young Player of the Year awards – in consecutive years, Viduka made an indelible impression upon the local game and may well prove a talent unique among his generation.

The Knights have found no adequate replacement to fill his golden boots and, with over half the regular season completed, only two teams had scored fewer goals. Only their watertight defence has kept them in contention for the end-of-season play-offs.

The Knights have never been amongst Australia's glamour clubs and they endured a long, hard journey to the top of the heap.

The first, tentative steps were taken in 1953 when a group of Croatian migrants based in Melbourne's western suburbs formed a social club to "facilitate the desire of our people to retain their culture and provide a venue for them to maintain the Croatian spirit".

Soccer has long been a vital facet of Croatian culture; particularly transplanted Croatian culture. The club was initially called just Croatia and, from the outset, organised picnics, dances and various other activities, including an annual Miss Croatia beauty contest, but soccer has always been the prime activity.

Another organisation with a similar *raison d'etre* was also active in Melbourne during the early and mid-1950s. The Hajduk club so successfully recruited members that Croatia feared for their future and moved lock, stock and barrel to Geelong, a city 70km away.

It was in Geelong that the club first began to make their presence felt in the Victoria State League. They were only denied promotion to the First Division in 1959 when Preston gained an additional point for an opposing team fielding unregistered players. But, Croatia office bearers then acquired control of Preston, previously a Hungarian dominated side, at the latter's annual General Meeting and enticed nine players from Geelong for the following season! The entity now renamed Preston Croatia experienced just one season in the First Division before being relegated.

The original Croatia, in the meantime, were making little headway and returned to Melbourne. In 1961 the Victorian capital had three clubs with fragmenting Croatian support: Lion (formerly Hajduk) and Croat FC (the next name adopted by the Preston-based outfit) in the First Division, and Croatia in the second.

Croatia leapfrogged over Lions the following year by winning the Second Division as their old rivals were relegated. What had become a ludicrous situation was partially rationalised when Croatia and Croat FC united to become Melbourne Croatia. Lions, however, went their separate way and fell into permanent decline.

The combined club did not achieve immediate success. They were demoted in 1963 before, 12 months later, claiming a fourth Second Division title, and the first in their new guise.

The major turning point in Melbourne Croatia's history came in 1965. Long-serving president Frank Burin recruited six Scottish players, including 14 times-capped former Celtic defender Duncan McKay.

Almost overnight, the club was transformed into the dominant force of Victorian soccer. During 1968, they captured all the state's major competitions.

Five more trophies were won over the next four years and, although the honours had dried up by the time Australia's National League kicked off in 1977, Melbourne Croatia would almost certainly have been an original member but for a stubborn reluctance to change their name.

More accommodating were Adelaide Juventus, Adelaide Hellas, Pan Hellenic, Alexander, Melbourne Hellas and Sydney Hakoah, who discarded their 'ethnic' appellations for Adelaide City, West Adelaide, Sydney Olympic, Heidelberg United, South Melbourne and Sydney City respectively.

With their previous major antagonists now in the nationwide competition, Melbourne Croatia re-asserted their stranglehold upon the Victoria State League. Thirteen further local prizes were won before the ASF was compelled to invite them into the expanded 1984 national league. They entered on their own terms – and that meant name retention.

The ASF, however, was not to relent long in their 'Aussiefication' campaign and, in 1992, it forced the national league's most intransigent club into accepting a ludicrous compromise. For one season, the flagship of Victoria's Croatian community were officially known as 'Melbourne CSC' – as if nobody would consider the abbreviation stood for Croatia Soccer Club!

Thankfully, this nonsense was abandoned in 1993 when the club, at last, bowed to the inevitable and accepted the designation Melbourne Knights.

Melbourne Bridesmaids would have been more appropriate.

In 1984, Melbourne Croatia were defeated by Newcastle Rosebud United in the National Cup Final; in 1991 crosstown rivals South Melbourne won a thrilling National League Grand Final on penalties; in 1992 the Reds were again thwarted in a Grand Final penalty shoot-out by Adelaide City; and, in 1994, a long-range shot from one of Melbourne's ex-players, Damian Mori, once more condemned the Knights to runners-up medals.

In each of the three seasons they finished as beaten finalists, the Melbourne club had qualified for the play-offs by heading the league after its round robin phase.

The 1994-95 campaign made up for all previous disappointments, though, Heidelberg United were humiliated 6-0 in the National Cup Final and, on the ground of old nemesis Adelaide City, Knights won 2-0 to, at last, lay their hands upon the Championship trophy.

Staying at the top is even harder than getting there and Knights' task, without Bazic, Viduka and Horvat, is more daunting than most defending champions face.

However, with five members of Australia's current senior international squad in their line-up, the Knights are still a formidable outfit. There may still be glory days ahead of them.

'When the National League kicked off in 1977 Melbourne Croatia would have almost certainly been an original member but for a stubborn reluctance to change their name. In 1993 they bowed to the inevitable'

NEW CALEDONIAN Christian Kerembeu ***(above)*** became the first non-Australasian to be named Oceania Footballer of the Year when he topped the 1995 poll. The Sampdoria and France midfielder claimed eight votes more than Mark Bosnich of Aston Villa and Australia. Then came three other European-based Australians: Paul Okon (Club Brugge), Mark Viduka (Croatia Zagreb) and Robbie Slater (West Ham United).

IN BRIEF

MIRKO BAZIC has been succeeded as coach of Melbourne Knights by Ian Dobson, who was a run-of-the-mill defender with home town club Hull City and Hereford United in his native England before, in 1982, moving to Australia where he has not, as yet, made any great waves either. Dobson's appointment means that 25 per cent of Australia's national league teams are now coached by Yorkshiremen.

SOUTH MELBOURNE, the great under-achievers of Australian soccer, won their first major trophy for five years when defeating Newcastle Breakers 3-1 in the Johnnie Walker Cup Final. New Zealand international Vaughan Coveny scored twice for the victors, who are now coached by former national team coach Frank Arok.

THE HUGE gap between Australia and Oceania's small island nations was again apparent during the region's Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Adelaide.

The Olyroos easily overcame Fiji (10-0 and 5-0), Solomon Islands (7-0 and 4-0) and Vanuatu (9-1 and 12-0), with a team that contained several European-based professionals, including Craig Moore (Glasgow Rangers) and Mark Viduka (Croatia Zagreb).

The 4-0 victory over the Solomons was converted to a 3-0 loss after the Aussies fielded a player not named on their official team list and New Zealand, beaten 5-0 10 days earlier, won the return 1-0. Australia advanced to the last phase of the qualifying series (against CONCACAF's second-rated team) on goal difference ahead of New Zealand.

Tasty Fish

Mark Gleeson profiles the first South African player to move to Serie A

Been Fishing . . . Lazio have snapped up Mark

WITHIN an hour of his return to the team hotel after South Africa's 3-0 win over Cameroon in their opening Nations Cup match, Mark Fish was surrounded by agents wanting to "have a word" in his ear.

The advisors remain part of his entourage as the South African defender now commits himself to the rigours of Serie A with Lazio next season.

It will be a world away from South Africa's National Soccer League where Fish has become a popular figure in three-and-a-half seasons.

It was at the age of 18 that Fish made his league debut – as a striker for Jomo Cosmos. Fish was quickly thrust into the limelight. Converted into a central defender by Cosmos, he became an integral part of the small club's fairytale run to the semi-finals of the 1993 African Cup-winners Cup.

By October of that year, just 12 months after his First Division debut, he earned his first cap for South Africa, becoming the country's youngest-ever international.

That match, a 4-0 defeat by Mexico in which Fish played in midfield, marked the end of Augusto Palacios' mediocre run as coach. Current coach, Clive Barker, moved Fish into defence, where he has used him ever since.

He was sold to Orlando Pirates at the start of 1994 after Cosmos were relegated, and he quickly tasted the joys of winning a championship.

Last year, Pirates went one better, winning the African Champions Cup, with Fish providing the long ball that led to the decisive goal in the second leg of the final against Abidjan.

Having just turned 22, he has also now won a Nations Cup winners' medal and a place in the African All-Star team, chosen after the Nations Cup.

An exuberant personality, who was a quality cricketer at the same school as Roy Wegerle, Fish has a huge appetite for life. His tall frame and flowing locks, which look so pronounced as he goes on his trademark marauding runs upfield, are sure to make him a favourite in Rome. But unlike Paul Gascoigne's, Fish's practical jokes and antics are normally kept out of the public eye – his personality both encouraged and protected by Barker.

Part-time poet and grunge rock junkie, Fish has a serious side, too, and a brain to match. Lazio are sure to find him a wide-eyed youngster at first, but with some success he could develop into as charismatic a crowd-pleaser as he has been in South Africa.

Rainbow warriors

Jonathan Shallard reports from Johannesburg on the lessons from the 1996 Nations Cup

MARK WILLIAMS and Nelson Mandela shared the spotlight at the close of the African Nations Cup in South Africa.

One was the goalscoring hero of the new African champions – winning the title at first attempt – the other was the man without whose inspirational diplomacy no-one could have envisaged the event being staged where it was.

Williams – for whom the much-maligned Graham Taylor paid £300,000 on Wolves' behalf – leaped from the substitutes' bench to score twice in two minutes and break down Tunisia's final resistance. But, as Soweto erupted in celebration of Bafana Bafana, other political concerns were complicating the outlook for African football.

More than one observer had forecast a black African winner of the World Cup before the end of the century. The first was Brazilian Joao Saldanha in the 1970s, who compared the exuberance of the African footballer with his own countrymen's before 'Europeanisation' had tainted the beautiful game in the state championships of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo.

That forecast now appears too optimistic. Africa has the talent, but so do other continents. The evidence of events on the eve of the African finals was that political squabbles and posturing present the greatest hindrance. Nigeria have been barred from the next two African Nations events and may be excluded from the World Cup. The reason? State President Sani Abacha and henchmen believed they could hold the African game to ransom for their own (financial?) ends. Having made FIFA president Joao Havelange look a fool once, having persuaded him to use brinkmanship with the World Cup draw in Paris, they baited him yet again over the African finals.

All for one . . . the South African rugby team lend support to their footballing countrymen

This time, the African confederation under the increasing-in-stature Issa Hayatou called their bluff. Nigeria stayed away and should pay the price.

That is a tragedy for the African game. Talented players such as Finidi George, Nwankwo Kanu, Jay-Jay Okocha and Daniel Amokachi should be seen on the world game's great stages. It was not their fault that they could not play. The players wanted to. They even petitioned the Nigerian government. To no avail. And with Nigeria went black Africa's best hope of making that World Cup-winning forecast come true.

South Africa have made great strides in a few years. But domestic advantage played its part, what with their vibrant, predominantly black support and the altitude, as did a couple of refereeing decisions which went their way. They were also carried forward by the intense national pride which will shortly fuel Croatia's challenge at Euro 96. As Williams said: "We have an inner strength which comes from the feeling inside us, as players for South Africa."

Not everyone was a success. On the playing side George Weah was a disappointment, though he blamed a lack of financial, administrative and logistical support from the Liberian federation and, by extension, the government.

Off the pitch the media were not over-impressed by some of the 'organising'. That was one element of a deeper problem which made a nonsense of Havelange's early canvassing for South Africa to be World Cup hosts for 2006 (Indeed, African football might gain a more sympathetic hearing from other continents if Havelange refrained from ramming it down everyone's throats).

But then, African football can never be separated from the most significant of undertones – or overtones, perhaps. Witness the closing scenes, as Mandela, accompanied by the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, and F W de Klerk, descended from the stands to kiss the Cup offered by their national team's white captain, Neil Tovey.

Politics and sport can work for good and for ill. The 1996 African Nations Cup offered both extremes.

Nigeria in Olympic frame

NIGERIA have an opportunity to redeem their tattered international image by winning a place at the Atlanta Olympics. The Eagles first have to beat Zimbabwe.

IVORIAN champions ASEC Abidjan have signed Abdul Karim Sylla and Lamine Bangura, a Sierra Leonean international, from AS Kaloum of Guinea.

MARK GLEESON

A GOAL in extra time gave Simba of Tanzania victory in the final of the East and Central African Club Cup for the fifth year in succession.

PHIL MINSHULL

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AGE GROUPS

Super Group:	Boys	born August 1, 1976 & later
Group A:	Boys	born August 1, 1976 & later
Group B:	Boys	born August 1, 1978 & later
Group C:	Boys	born August 1, 1979 & later
Group D:	Boys	born August 1, 1981 & later
Group E:	Boys	born August 1, 1983 & later
Group F:	Girls	born August 1, 1976 & later

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Diary FEBRUARY 1996

JANUARY							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
3	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
4	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
5	29	30	31				

FEBRUARY							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
5				1	2	3	4
6	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
7	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9	26	27	28	29			

MARCH							
Week	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
9					1	2	3
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11	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
12	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
13	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

THURSDAY 1

ACTION: China thrash the Philippines 7-0 and Hong Kong beat Macao 4-1 in Asian Cup qualifying ties.
ENGLAND: Roger Stanislaus, of Third Division Leyton Orient, is banned for one year after becoming the first English League player trapped by a post-match test for using a performance-enhancing drug . . . West Ham sign Sporting Lisbon starlet Dani on loan until the season's end.
HOLLAND: Italy's Internazionale obtain an option to sign Ajax's Nigerian brothers Nwankwo and Christopher Kanu. Nwankwo is reported to have agreed a £2.5m contract which would keep him at Inter until June 2000.
ITALY: Parma forward Faustino Asprilla denies Newcastle claims that he has a knee injury which may threaten his £7.5million transfer.
JAPAN: Prime Minister Hashimoto assures JFA officials that his government will give full support to Japan's 2002 World Cup bid. His statement follows speculation that the interest of North Korea in the bidding process may have further reduced Japan's lead in the bidding process.
SCOTLAND: Everton striker Duncan Ferguson is back in the Euro 96 frame for Scotland after a judicial review by Judge Lord Macfadyean rules that the SFA disciplinary committee had acted beyond their powers in imposing a 12-match ban for head-butting Raith defender John McStay in April 1994.
SOUTH AFRICA: Local officials sort out a row over hotel accommodation for Tunisia's African Nations Cup finalists but only after the Tunisian delegation threatens to boycott the Final in anger.
SPAIN: Raul follows the example of Real Madrid team-mates Ivan Zamorano and Luis Enrique in securing multi-million-pound insurance against career-threatening injury . . . Espanyol's Olympic medal-winning goalkeeper Toni Jimenez is promoted into the national squad for the friendly against Norway in place of injured Andoni Zubizarreta.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA names the top clubs invited to a European competitions talk-in next week. They are: Casino Salzburg, Rapid Wien (Austria), Anderlecht, Club Brugge, Standard Liege (Belgium), Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United (England), Paris Saint-Germain, Auxerre, Monaco (France), Werder Bremen, Borussia Dortmund, Bayern Munich (Germany), PSV Eindhoven, Ajax Amsterdam, Feyenoord (Holland), Milan, Juventus, Internazionale (Italy), Benfica, FC Porto (Portugal), Moscow Spartak, Moscow Dynamo, Spartak Vladikavkaz (Russia), Aberdeen, Celtic, Rangers (Scotland), Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona (Spain), IFK Gothenburg, Malmo (Sweden).

Got it covered . . . Raul of Real Madrid

FRIDAY 2

ACTION: Express of Uganda beat Sunrise of Mauritius 1-0 in their African Champions Cup first round, first leg tie.
DENMARK: Michael Laudrup may not play at Euro 96 because of a row over sponsorship.
ENGLAND: West Ham's Croatian centre-back Slaven Bilic is granted his work permit . . . Middlesbrough hit club v country problems with Jan Fjortoft summoned to play for Norway against Spain in a friendly while both Jaime Moreno (Bolivia) and Juninho (Brazil) have been selected for their countries' squads for the forthcoming South American Olympic qualifiers . . . Euro 96 officials say that extra tickets may be available for Danish fans because of an anticipated low take-up among fans of Portugal, Turkey and Croatia.
ITALY: The national federation extends national coach Arrigo Sacchi's contract until the end of December 1998 . . . Franco Baresi, 35-year-old Milan skipper and sweeper, extends his contract until June 1997 . . . the Italian federation gains permission from FIFA to use the fourth referee as match time-keeper.
NORWAY: Stromsgodset sign striker Jostein Flo from Sheffield United on a two-year contract.
ROMANIA: International midfielder Pavel Badea, aged 22, is sold by Universitatea Craiova to Chun Num Dragons of South Korean. Badea previously had a spell abroad with Swiss club Lausanne.
SOUTH AFRICA: The Confederation of African Football bans Nigeria from the next two African Nations Cups as punishment for withdrawing from the 1996 finals. A report will go to FIFA which could suspend Nigeria from the 1998 World Cup.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA says it does not expect European qualifiers for the Atlanta Olympic finals to take advantage of the option of using three over-age players.

SATURDAY 3

ACTION: South Africa celebrate their arrival in the African Nations Cup by winning the Final with a 2-0 win over Tunisia. Zambia, 1-0 winners over Ghana, finish third . . . seven top division clubs fall in the French Cup, most notably Saint-Etienne against Nimes. In an all top-division clash, Monaco beat Nantes 5-4 on penalties after a 2-2 draw.
FRANCE: Bayern Munich striker Jean-Pierre Papin undergoes ankle surgery which virtually rules him out of Euro 96.

SUNDAY 4

ACTION: Romania win 3-2 away to Qatar in a friendly in Doha . . . Hong Kong lose 2-0 at home to China in an Asian Olympic qualifier.
FRANCE: Bordeaux sack trainer Slavo Muslin after their 3-2 extra time defeat by Third Division Toulon in the second round of the French Cup.
ITALY: Roberto Donadoni says he is poised to sign a contract with MLS . . . Parma say they have called off Faustino Asprilla's transfer to Newcastle after failing to reach agreement over payment terms.

MONDAY 5

ENGLAND: The FA warns hoteliers against increasing room prices for fans coming for Euro 96. Spokesman David Davies says: "We want a football festival which reflects nothing but credit on this country. Hotels which exploit our guests are letting everyone down."
GERMANY: Aad de Mos and Werder Bremen agree an out-of-court settlement following his dismissal as coach in January.
ITALY: Inter's Nicola Berti is doubtful for the European Championship finals after tearing ligaments in his left knee in training last Saturday . . . Parma's lawyer, Leandro Cantamessa, says he believes that Faustino Asprilla's transfer to Newcastle will still go ahead . . . England midfielder Paul Ince says he is now happy to stay in Italy following the arrival at Inter of Roy Hodgson as coach.
NIGERIA: Sports Minister Jim Nwobodo announces Nigeria's intention to appeal against the ban from the next two African Nations Cups imposed by the CAF.
PORTUGAL: Bulgarian striker Ivailo Yordanov scores Sporting's 39th-minute winner away to bottom club Campomaiorense.
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: Mick McCarthy is appointed new manager of the Republic of Ireland in succession to Jack Charlton.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA secretary-general Gerhard Aigner says he believes Wednesday's meeting with leading European clubs will produce a gentleman's agreement to maintain the contentious three-plus-two rule.
UNITED STATES: Columbus Crew are selected to make first selection in Major League Soccer's inaugural player draft.

TUESDAY 6

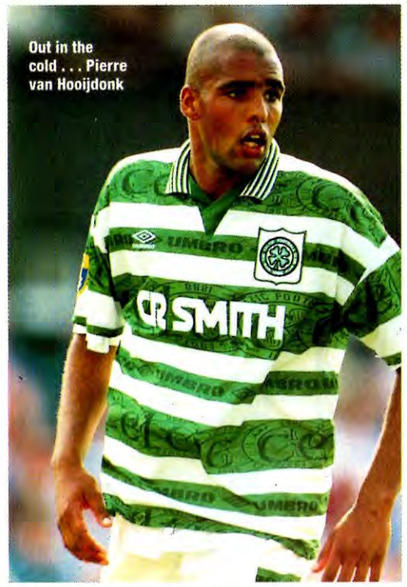
ACTION: Zaragoza and Ajax draw 1-1 in Spain in the first leg of the European Supercup.
ENGLAND: James Kelly of Wolves is jailed for five years for kicking a man to death in a brawl after an early-morning fight outside a Liverpool hotel last September . . . Manchester United's Nicky Butt is charged with causing £250-worth of damage to a car outside a nightclub . . . Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson hopes to complete the signing of Brazil World Cup-winner Branco from Internacional of Porto Alegre this week . . . Lucas Radebe and Phil Masinga are given a ticking-off after returning late to Leeds from the African Nations Cup.
GERMANY: National coach Berti Vogts tells Lothar Matthaus at a clear-the-air meeting that the Bayern Munich veteran must prove his fitness to win a place at Euro 96.
ITALY: Serie A players call a strike on March 17 in protest at the League's unilateral decision to scrap half of Serie C.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA general secretary Gerd Aigner says he hopes a compromise agreement on maintaining a transfer system may yet be reached in talks with the EC.
UNITED STATES: Columbus Crew buy American and make striker Brian McBride the first selection of the inaugural Major League Soccer draft. McBride spent last season in the lower German divisions with Wolfsburg. All-time top US national team marksman Eric Wynalda is assigned to San Jose Clash.

WEDNESDAY 7

ACTION: Saso Udovic scores six times as Slovenia thrash Iceland 7-1 in the opening match of the annual Malta spring tournament in Valletta. Russia beat hosts Malta 2-0 . . . Spain beat Norway 1-0 in a friendly in Las Palmas.
ENGLAND: Newcastle chairman Sir John Hall says that Faustino Asprilla's transfer from Parma has been settled and all that is now needed is a work permit.
ITALY: Inter midfielder Nicola Berti flies to Vail, Colorado, for surgery on damaged knee ligaments . . . United States defender Alexi Lalas and Italy veteran Giuseppe Galderisi prepare for an early exit from Padova to join New England Revolution in MLS.
ROMANIA: The federation promises lucrative rewards if its players win the European Championship. President Mircea Sandu says: "If we win the cup then the bonuses will not be smaller than those promised by the German federation, namely £45,000 for each player."
SCOTLAND: Rangers prepare to press their case to sign Brazilian striker Jardel.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA and Europe's top clubs reach general agreement on how to expand the Champions League, Cup-winners Cup and UEFA Cup. The Champions League would allow the eight top nations to enter not only their champion club but another to be selected on the basis of a 10 or five-year record . . . FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter says that FIFA is not in any hurry to seek a change in the size of goals.

THURSDAY 8

ALBANIA: The federation says it wants to redevelop three stadia to bring them up to standard for European competition.
ENGLAND: Middlesbrough sign Brazilian World Cup defender Branco on an 18-month contract although there are doubts about his qualification for a work permit . . . Newcastle clinch the signing of Faustino Asprilla with his work permit confirmed – but Ilie Dumitrescu (West Ham) and Marc Hottiger (Everton) both have their work permit applications rejected.
FRANCE: Cannes defender Gilles Hampartzoumian is suspended for two months after testing positive for cannabis.
HOLLAND: Uncapped new forward Peter Hoekstra, 22, is one of eight Ajax players named in the Dutch squad for the forthcoming international against Belgium in Eindhoven. Glenn Helder and Dennis Bergkamp are both rested at the request of Arsenal.


Out in the cold . . . Pierre van Hooijdonk

ITALY: Genoa beat Cesena 1-0 to complete a 5-0 aggregate win in the Italian Final of the Anglo-Italian Cup.
SCOTLAND: Rangers' slim hopes of signing Brazilian striker Jardel are upset by Kilmarnock's decision to seek a work permit for Ghanaian target Sammy Adeji.
UNITED STATES: *ABC Sports* and *ESPN* reach agreement with FIFA to televise all matches from the 1998 World Cup.

FRIDAY 9

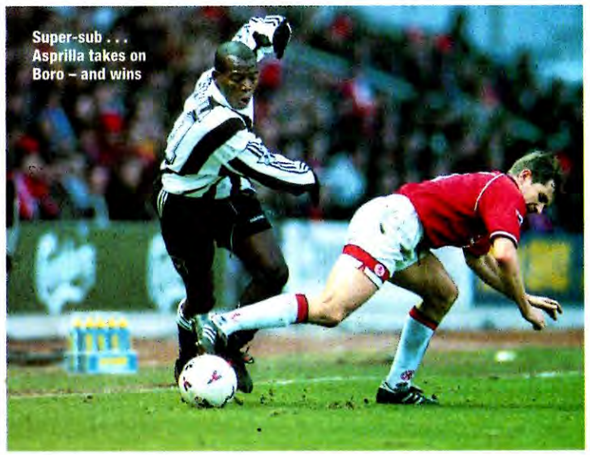
ACTION: In the Malta four-team event, the hosts draw 0-0 with Slovenia and Russia beat Iceland 3-0 . . . in the Kings Cup in Bangkok, hosts Thailand beat Finland 1-0 while Romania and Denmark draw 2-2.
ENGLAND: The Football Association says it will host a summit of top European football federations next Monday to consider the implications and possible reactions to the Bosman case . . . Manchester United secure with Umbro what is believed to be British football's biggest-ever kit sponsorship deal – estimated at £60million over the next six years . . . Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein says he is hopeful for a positive response to a paper on European club league development which he has submitted to UEFA and the continent's top clubs . . . a hi-tech network of computer 'Photophones' to help combat soccer violence during the European Championship is unveiled by British Home Secretary Michael Howard.
FRANCE: The federation announces a four-team warm-up event for the 1998 World Cup which will be staged in the early summer of 1997 featuring the hosts plus Italy, England and probably Brazil.
SCOTLAND: Celtic manager Tommy Burns says he is amazed that Holland have continued to overlook striker Pierre van Hooijdonk. Burns says: "I don't think there are many Dutchmen who have scored 20 goals anywhere."
SOUTH AFRICA: Traffic in Johannesburg is brought to a standstill by a victory parade in honour of South Africa's new African Nations champions.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA president Joao Havelange criticises UEFA and the top European clubs for the elitist changes planned for the European club competitions . . . FIFA confirms that the draw for the 1998 World Cup finals will be staged at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille before a crowd of 40,000.

SATURDAY 10

ACTION: Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla makes a match-winning debut as substitute to inspire Newcastle's recovery from 1-0 down to beat neighbours Middlesbrough 2-1 . . . in France, Auxerre step up the pressure on leaders Paris Saint-Germain after beating Lyon 2-0 . . . the Bundesliga resumes after its two-month winter break with four matches postponed and leaders and champions Borussia Dortmund held 1-1 at Kaiserslautern . . . PSV Eindhoven leapfrog over Ajax, at least temporarily, at the top of the Dutch league after thrashing Volendam 7-0 . . . Barcelona halt Real Madrid's mini-revival with a 3-0 win at the Nou Camp.

SUNDAY 11

ACTION: In the Kings Cup in Bangkok, hosts Thailand lose 3-0 to Romania but Denmark draw again, this time 0-0 against Finland . . . Russia win the four-team event in Malta, beating Slovenia 3-1 in their last match with a hat-trick from Igor Simuntenkov. Malta crash 4-1 to Iceland in the other game . . . Lebanon win another friendly, this time 1-0 at home to Ecuador . . . Brugge beat Anderlecht 2-1 in Belgium to go five points clear . . . French leaders Paris Saint-Germain lose surprisingly by 3-2 at home to Montpellier, who hit back from 2-0 down with three goals in five minutes . . . Bayern Munich fall 2-1 to reviving Hamburg in Germany . . . George Weah's first-minute goal provides Milan with a 1-0 win over Atalanta and keeps them five points ahead of Fiorentina, who beat Parma 1-0 . . . in Portugal, Leca have to concede defeat when two serious injuries and three expulsions leave them with only six players – one fewer than the statutory minimum – three minutes from the end of a 2-0 defeat by Boavista.
ENGLAND: Tottenham chairman Alan Sugar says that the creation of a European league in which clubs abandoned domestic competition would destroy soccer.
HOLLAND: Controversy is provoked by the KNVB's plans to screen top division and cup matches on a new sports-only channel in which it has a 10 per cent holding.


Super-sub . . . Asprilla takes on Boro – and wins

MONDAY 12

AUSTRIA: The draw for the UEFA under-16 finals, to be held in Austria from April 29 to May 11, is as follows: Group A: Republic of Ireland, Austria, Scotland, Portugal or Denmark, Poland. Group B: Romania, Ukraine, Greece, Germany or Holland. Group C: France, Croatia, Spain, Yugoslavia, Malta, Armenia or Switzerland. Group D: England, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg or Slovakia, Turkey, Israel or Italy.
GERMANY: Udinese striker Oliver Bierhoff and Hamburg midfielder Joerg Albertz receive their first international calls when Berti Vogts includes them in a 25-strong squad for the forthcoming friendly against Portugal.
SPAIN: Newspaper polls report a swing of Barcelona fans' support back towards coach Johan Cruyff after speculation that he might be succeeded later this year by national coach Javier Clemente.
UNITED STATES: US federation president Alan Rothenberg, previewing the April launch of MLS, says he believes this could provide the foundation for an eventual American World Cup victory.

TUESDAY 13

ACTION: Denmark reach the final of the Kings Cup in Bangkok by defeating hosts Thailand 3-1. They will play Romania, who draw 1-1 with Finland.
BELGIUM: Brugge's Australian sweeper Paul Okon is ruled out for the rest of the season after tearing knee ligaments.
ENGLAND: Tottenham say they want to evict the London Monarchs American Football team from their battered White Hart Lane pitch.
HOLLAND: Wednesday's friendly between Holland and Belgium is cancelled because of rain and frost.
ITALY: Giovanni Trapattoni quits as coach of struggling Cagliari after just seven months. Adriano Bardin, Cagliari's goalkeeping coach, is appointed caretaker.

WEDNESDAY 14

ACTION: Australia beat Japan 3-0 in Melbourne.
BRAZIL: Confusion arises when it is revealed that Brazil's 'internationals' against Bulgaria and Ukraine were, in fact, matches against club sides Slavia Sofia and Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk.
BULGARIA: The federation announces five fixtures leading up to Euro 96, starting with a Probables v Possibles match in Sofia in February. Then come full internationals, away to England, Slovakia and Macedonia, and home to the United Arab Emirates.
ENGLAND: Holders Everton are knocked out of the FA Cup, beaten 2-1 by First Division club Port Vale . . . Grimsby manager Brian Laws has to apologise in public to Italian player Ivano Bonetti whose jaw Laws broke in a post-match incident . . . former Liverpool manager Bob Paisley dies aged 77.

THURSDAY 15

ENGLAND: Former top referee Howard King is banned from any involvement in soccer for 10 years as punishment for claiming in the *News of the World* that clubs had tried to bribe him with prostitutes and expensive gifts to influence vital European ties . . . Premier League clubs agree that chief executive Rick Parry should write to UEFA, proposing that extra places on offer in the Champions League should be awarded on current performance and not past achievements . . . Wolves sign Australians Steve Corica and Zeljko Kalac from Leicester . . . Romanian Ilie Dumitrescu says he may go to the European Court of Justice if his appeal against a work permit refusal fails.
FRANCE: Blenod, the part-time minnows from eastern France, are drawn against Marseille in the third round of the French Cup. Draw: Auxerre v Paris S-G, Blenod v Marseille, Caen v Sochaux, Lille v Monaco, Niort v Strasbourg, Thouars v Nimes, Toulon v Montpellier, Valence v Laval . . . Aime Jacquet calls up uncapped Lens midfielder Pierre in place of injured Vincent Guerin for the forthcoming friendly against Greece. Eric Cantona and David Ginola are again overlooked.
HOLLAND: Officials of electronics giant Philips say the KNVB's plan, in partnership, to set up a new sports channel is unlikely to be halted by the European Commission.
ITALY: Gabriel Batistuta scores a hat-trick as Fiorentina beat Inter 3-1 in a Cup semi-final first leg.

Diary FEBRUARY 1996

Hat-trick hero . . . Gabriel Batistuta

PORTUGAL: Porto goalkeeper Vitor Baia is recalled for Portugal's friendly against Germany in Oporto on February 21.
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: New team manager Mick McCarthy has his attempt to appoint Ian Evans as full-time assistant blocked by the FAI.
SINGAPORE: Singapore-based Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) provides £700,000 sponsorship for a South-east Asian tournament for the Tiger Cup. It will be launched in September and be contested by Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
SPAIN: League leaders Atletico Madrid reach the Cup semi-finals with a 3-0 quarter-final win over Tenerife, who have two players sent off.

FRIDAY 16

ACTION: Romania beat Denmark 2-1 in the Kings Cup Final in Bangkok. Hosts Thailand defeat Finland 5-2 in the third-place play-off.
ARGENTINA: Brazil manager Mario Zagalo, speaking on the eve of the South American Olympic qualifying tournament in Argentina, says: "We've won everything else in football, that's why we have such an overriding ambition to win gold in Atlanta."
GERMANY: Bayern deny reports of a power-struggle between president Franz Beckenbauer and coach Otto Rehhagel – prompted by a TV claim that Beckenbauer had forced Rehhagel into playing Mehmet Scholl last weekend against Hamburg instead of Andy Herzog. Lothar Matthaus denies reports that he had faked an injury to ensure he was substituted in the same match.
JAPAN: Mexico and Yugoslavia are invited to join Japan in the 17th annual three-nation Kirin Cup in May.
SPAIN: The semi-final draw for the Cup is Valencia v Atletico Madrid and Barcelona v Espanyol. The ties will be played on February 21 and 28.
UNITED STATES: MLS commissioner Doug Logan says the new league will seek FIFA's permission to experiment with larger goals in its inaugural season.

SATURDAY 17

ACTION: Footballer of the Year Giovanni scores twice in Santos' 3-0 win away to Ferroviaria in the Sao Paulo championship. But a record low attendance of 61 fans watch Novorizontino beat XV de Jau 4-0 . . . speculation increases over the future of coach Luis Fernandez after French leaders Paris Saint-Germain lose a third successive match, 1-0 to Strasbourg . . . Bayern Munich crash 4-1 at home to Karlsruhe, their second successive defeat since the winter break . . . bad weather forces the postponements of the entire Dutch weekend schedule . . . in Turkey, Welshman Dean Saunders scores twice on his first starting appearance for Galatasaray for three months after knee trouble in a 2-1 win over Genclerbirligi.
REP IRELAND: Sean Connolly resigns as chief executive of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) on "mutually acceptable terms".

SUNDAY 18

ACTION: Brazil beat Peru 4-1 in their opening match of the South American Olympic qualifying tournament. Argentina beat Ecuador 6-1 and Venezuela defeat Colombia 1-0 . . . Lebanon beat Lokomotiv of Slovakia 3-1 in a friendly in Beirut . . . Manchester United reach the quarter-finals of the FA Cup with a 2-1 home victory over neighbours Manchester City . . . top three AEK, Panathinaikos and Olympiakos all win in Greece . . . Liberian George Weah has to be carried off with a head injury after scoring Milan's late winner in a 3-2 win over Bari in Italy . . . in Spain, a late goal from Guillermo Amor earns Barcelona a 2-1 win over Oviedo and their first away win in over four months.
ITALY: Juventus and Parma provide more than half of the 22 players called up by Arrigo Sacchi for a three-day national squad training session.
PORTUGAL: Sporting Lisbon, after all, sack coach Carlos Queiroz following Saturday's 0-0 draw against Benfica. He is succeeded by youth coach Fernando Mendes.

MONDAY 19

ACTION: In the Carlsberg Cup, in Hong Kong, Sweden beat a local League XI 1-0 and Japan thrash Poland 5-0 . . . Uruguay beat Bolivia 2-0 in the Olympic qualifiers.
ALBANIA: The federation agrees to play a friendly against Bosnia in Sarajevo on April 24.
COSTA RICA: The federation consider hiring ex-Mexico boss Miguel Mejia Baron.
ENGLAND: UEFA's executive agrees to extend cooperation with African football; organise an under-16 tournament between European and African teams in the winter of 1997-98; and consider a regular match between select teams from Europe and Africa.
SCOTLAND: Top referee Jim McGilvray resigns in protest that the Scottish FA guidelines have created "robots with whistles".

TUESDAY 20

ENGLAND: Middlesbrough say they are confident Branco qualifies for a work permit. But simultaneously the Department of Employment freezes all applications while it reconsiders the work permit criteria for foreign players . . . the FA declares a new campaign against unlicensed agents.
GERMANY: Berti Vogts says that only the persuasive words of DFB president Egidius Braun prevented him resigning as national coach after the 1994 World Cup failure.
HOLLAND: The European Supercup return fixture between Ajax and Zaragoza has to be postponed because of a frozen pitch in Amsterdam.
SPAIN: Espanyol are ordered to play one home match at a neutral venue as punishment for trouble at Sunday's home game against Atletico Madrid when referee Brito Arceo was struck by an orange. Espanyol are also fined £600.
UNITED STATES: USSF president Alan Rothenberg, maintaining his MLS pre-launch promotion campaign, says: "Everyone thought that with the World Cup over, the circus was leaving town, but we have showed it was not a fluke."

WEDNESDAY 21

ACTION: Two goals from Andy Moller earn Germany an impressive 2-1 win away to Portugal in Oporto, while France defeat Greece 3-1 and Israel beat Lithuania 4-2 . . . in the South American Olympic qualifying tournament, Ecuador and Colombia draw 3-3 and Argentina beat Chile 2-1.
BELGIUM: Jean-Marc Bosman says a benefit match, to help meet his legal costs, will be staged in Malaga, Spain, or Paris on April 30.
CHINA: China will serve as one of England's warm-up opponents for Euro 96. China will host England in Beijing on May 23. England will then play a Hong Kong XI on May 26.
ENGLAND: Former England manager Graham Taylor is appointed general manager of struggling First Division side Watford . . . Liverpool stars past and present turn out for the funeral of Bob Paisley.
FRANCE: French football and television authorities confirm that fans will be able to watch any top division match live next season under a pay-per-view system.
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND: FAI vice-president Des Casey promises a new era of openness after a three-hour crisis meeting on the state of football in Ireland. The meeting follows the resignations of director of coaching Joe McGrath and chief executive Sean Connolly.
RUSSIA: Moscow Spartak are granted an exemption from the statutory residence licence fees which they have always previously had to pay on bringing in new players – a saving of around £100,000 per transfer.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid's Luboslav Penev and Valencia president Francisco Roig are involved in an exchange of punches after Atletico win their Cup semi-final first leg 5-3.
SWITZERLAND: South Africa climb six spots to 23rd in the FIFA world rankings thanks to their victory in the African Nations Cup.

THURSDAY 22

ACTION: Poland win the Carlsberg Cup in Hong Kong, defeating Japan 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 extra-time draw in the final. Poland beat a Hong Kong League XI 1-0 in the third-place play-off.
ENGLAND: South African defender Mark Fish cuts short his two-week trial at Manchester United to train with Lazio of Rome . . . Eoin Jess switches from Aberdeen to Coventry in a £2million move . . . FA chief executive Graham Kelly says the English authorities will fight any EU attempt to abolish the entire domestic transfer system . . . Euro 96 director Glen Kirton says there will be no perimeter fences despite concern over a pitch invasion by fans after the previous night's Coca-Cola League Cup-tie between Aston Villa and Arsenal at Villa Park . . . UEFA general secretary Gerhard Aigner says the European federation is likely to approve 22-strong player squads for the Euro 96 finals.
GERMANY: Swedish international Martin Dahlin is reported to have agreed terms to join Juventus at the season's end. Borussia Monchengladbach are expected to fight the transfer, perhaps in court . . . former Dynamo Dresden president Jurgen Otto is sentenced to three years in jail for looting assets from a construction company.
HOLLAND: Ajax and Zaragoza will play the postponed second leg of their European Supercup on February 28.
NORWAY: Per Ravn Omdal, prospective new president of the Norwegian federation, says he expects Norway to step into line with the Bosman case provisions even though the country is not an EU member . . . Blackburn's Henning Berg urges national coach Egil Olsen to stop experimenting with team selection in friendly matches and concentrate on improving Norway's world ranking.
WALES: Liverpool's veteran Danish midfielder, Jan Molby, is appointed player-manager of struggling Second Division side Swansea City.

FRIDAY 23

BOSNIA: The Bosnian federation arrange a friendly against English First Division side Millwall in Banja Luka on March 12.
ENGLAND: The Anglo-Italian Cup Final between West Bromwich Albion or Port Vale and Genoa is confirmed for Wembley on Sunday March 17, kick-off 1.30pm . . . Newcastle agree to pay Blackburn £3.75m for England midfielder David Batty . . . Gordon Taylor, FIFpro president, warns that English football must not fall out of step with continental transfer market developments . . . Sergei Yuran, Millwall's Russian forward, is charged with a drink-driving offence . . . the financial security of Euro 96 is secured by the confirmation of a £600,000 hand-out from UEFA to support media facilities costs.
HOLLAND: Patrick Kluivert is ordered to stand trial for causing death by dangerous driving on May 1.
SCOTLAND: Kilmarnock take Ghanaians Sammy Adeji and Steve Baidoo on trial . . . Celtic bid for Sporting Lisbon's Jorge Cadete.

SATURDAY 24

ACTION: In the South American Olympic qualifiers, Brazil beat Bolivia 4-1 with all four goals being scored by Caio . . . in England, Colombian Faustino Asprilla is at the centre of controversy after being involved in elbowing and head-butting incidents with Keith Curle in Newcastle's 3-3 draw with Manchester City . . . French leaders Paris Saint-Germain lose theirfourth game in a row as they go down 3-1 to Auxerre in the cup . . . German champions Borussia Dortmund lose 2-1 at home to Hansa Rostock.
HOLLAND: PSV's Brazilian striker Ronaldo is ruled out for the rest of this season after being told he needs surgery on his damaged right knee. He hopes to return to action for Brazil at the Olympic Games finals in Atlanta.

SUNDAY 25

ACTION: Sweden beat Australia 2-0 in an international friendly in Brisbane with two goals in the last four minutes from Andreas Andersson . . . Leeds reach the English Coca-Cola League Cup Final, beating Birmingham City 5-1 on aggregate . . . Bayern Munich find form at last, winning 6-1 away to bottom club Uerdingen . . . in Italy, Juventus are held 1-1 at home by league-leaders Milan . . . Porto, Benfica and Sporting all reach the semi-finals of the Portuguese Cup . . . another goal from Meho Kodro brings Barcelona a 1-0 win over Betis in Spain but Atletico Madrid remain eight points clear after beating Celta 3-2.
ENGLAND: Faustino Asprilla denies he deliberately elbowed Manchester City's Keith Curle but the FA calls for video evidence to consider whether to charge him with bringing the game into disrepute.
ITALY: Alexi Lalas is released by Padova to go home and play with New England Revolution.

MONDAY 26

BRAZIL: Kaiserslautern midfielder Arilson arrives back from Argentina after walking out on Brazil's Olympic squad in protest at being omitted from the team.
FRANCE: Milan players George Weah and Patrick Vieira escape with only minor scratches after their car skids off the road at Imperia on their way to France.
ENGLAND: Tottenham forward Darren Anderton is ruled out of Euro 96 as it emerges that his recovery from a November groin operation is taking much longer than expected . . . Arsenal manager Bruce Rioch flies to France in a team-strenthening exercise . . . Newcastle's Faustino Asprilla and Manchester City's Keith Curle are charged with misconduct by the FA after their skirmishes in the 3-3 draw at Maine Road
FRANCE: Struggling Saint-Etienne dismiss coach Elie Baup, two days after losing 1-0 to fellow relegation candidates Gueugnon . . . Paris Saint-Germain appoint a 'crisis committee' as speculation mounts that Luis Fernandez is to be replaced by assistant Joel Bats.
HOLLAND: Ajax are contracted by Nottingham Forest for a pre-season tournament on August 3 and 4 at the City Ground.
SCOTLAND: Manager Craig Brown names a 32-strong squad for an international get-together to prepare for Euro 96.

TRANSFER TRAIL

(Loan moves in italics)

Faustino **ASPRILLA** (F)	Parma	Newcastle
Pavel **BADEA** (M)	Univ. Craiova	Chun Num Dragons (SK)
David **BATTY** (M)	Blackburn	Newcastle
BRANCO (D)	out of contract	Middlesbrough
Jorge **CADETE** (F)	Sporting Lisbon	Celtic
Liam **DAISH** (D)	Birmingham	Coventry
DANI *(F)*	*Sporting Lisbon*	*West Ham*
Roberto **DONADONI** (M)	Milan	NY/NJ MetroStars
Jostein **FLO** (F)	Sheffield Utd	Stromsgodset
Giuseppe **GALDERISI** (F)	Padova	New England Revolution
Eoin **JESS** (F)	Aberdeen	Coventry
Brian **McBRIDE** (F)	Wolfsburg (Ger)	Columbus Crew
MANAGERS ON THE MOVE		
Dave **BASSETT**	out of contract	Crystal Palace
Bruno **GIORGI**	out of contract	Cagliari
Mick **McCARTHY**	Millwall	Rep. of Ireland
Jan **MOLBY**	Liverpool (player)	Swansea City
Slavo **MUSLIN**	Bordeaux	out of contract
Jimmy **NICHOLL**	Raith	Millwall
Carlos **QUEIROZ**	Sporting Lisbon	out of contract
Glenn **ROEDER**	Watford	out of contract
Graham **TAYLOR**	out of contract	Watford
Giovanni **TRAPATTONI**	Cagliari	out of contract

Crossword

WIN AN EXCLUSIVE *WORLD SOCCER* SWEATSHIRT

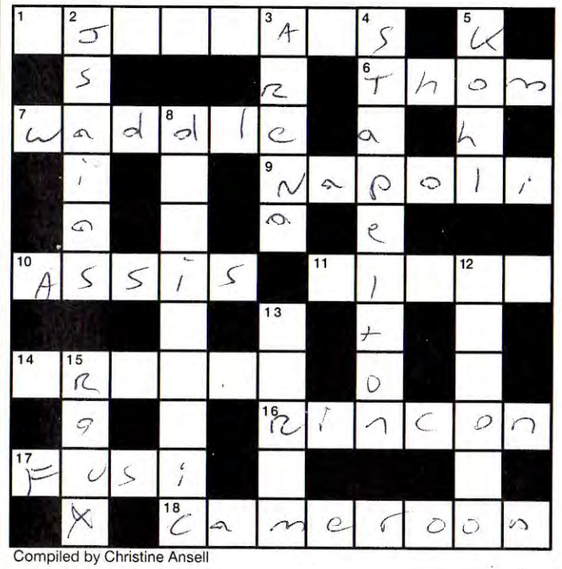
The first five correct entries will each win a WORLD SOCCER sweatshirt. Send entries by April 1 to: WORLD SOCCER CROSSWORD (APR), WORLD SOCCER, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS

MARCH SOLUTION
ACROSS: 1. Boskamp 7. Ewane 8. Speed 9. Seraing 10. Blomqvist 15. Capello 18. Kouba 19. Force 20. Ranieri
DOWN: 1. Basle (or Basel) 2. Stessl 3. Ards 4. Petrov 5. Mali 6. Sergi 11. Mulder 12. Stauce 13. Scifo 14. Fradi 16. Purk 17. Okon

MARCH WINNERS
Colin Hostler, Bedlington, Northumberland; Gary Smith, Guildford, Surrey; Iain Maclachlan, Edinburgh, Scotland; Paul Knight, Waltham Cross, Herts; Liam Harnett, Co. Limerick, Rep of Ireland.

CLUES ACROSS
1 .....Wolves forward who scored twice in the 1996 African Nations Cup final (8)
6 .....Former Germany and Leverkusen forward with Glasgow Celtic (4)
7 .....Sheffield Wednesday's veteran ex-Newcastle and England winger (6)
9 .....Italian Serie A club from the San Paolo (6)
10 .....Sporting Lisbon's Brazilian midfielder recruited from Sion (5)
11 .....Spain's 2B escapees bolstered by Yugoslavs Ratkovic and Milojevic (5)
14 .....Burkina Faso winger now a part of the Bressuire squad in France (6)
16 .....Colombian midfield man at the Bernabeu (6)
17 .....Juve defender who served Napoli, Torino and Italy (4)
18 .....African national side familiarly known as the Indomitable Lions (8)

CLUES DOWN
2 .....One-time Benfica Brazilian in England with Coventry City (6)
3 .....Ex-Collegiate man appointed coach to the 1996 US Olympic team (5)
4 .....Former Irish striker installed as Boston's New England team boss (9)
5 .....Ralf, midfield star of Freiburg's mercurial experience in the Bundesliga (4)
8 .....Ex-Honved coach back in Belgium in charge of Beveren (9)
12 .....Occasional Cameroon midfielder more regular with French club Laval (6)
13 .....Manager leading Turkey's European Championship challenge (5)
15 .....Monsieur Auxerre! (4)



Compiled by Christine Ansell

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

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_____

POSTCODE _____

APRIL

WORLD SERVICE

HOLDERS EVERTON KNOCKED OUT OF FA CUP . . . METZ MEET LYON IN FRENCH LEAGUE CUP FINAL . . . BUNDESLIGA RESUMES . . . ITALIAN CUP SEMI-FINALS . . .

BELGIUM

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

MIDWEEK

CERCLE BRUGES 2 (Lauwers 8, 62)
STANDARD 3 (Goossens 13, 37, Butoiu 66)
Att: 1,200

WEEKEND

CHARLEROI 0
HARELBEKE 0 Att: 5,000

LIERSE 2 (Lehmann 73, 75)
GENT 3 (Calo 38, De Meyer 52, Herreman 63)
Att: 4,500

SERAING 2 (Edmilson 23, Pagal 70)
MECHELEN 1 (Dodik 81) Att: 2,200

ST TRUIDEN 0
ANDERLECHT 5 (Boffin 12, De Bile 14, De Boeck 24, Versavel 34, 72) Att: 12,000

EENDRACHT AALST 0
ANTWERP 0 Att: 6,000

EKEREN 1 (Hamlai 29)
BEVEREN 0 Att: 2,500

RWDM 0
LOMMEL 2 (Vandervee 49, Scavone 51) Att: 3,000

WAREGEM 2 (Bossuyt 70, Kubica pen 85)
CLUB BRUGGE 5 (Claessens 11, Verheyen16, Staelens 66, De Brul 69, Verheyen 89) Att: 13,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

WEEKEND

MECHELEN 0
CLUB BRUGGE 2 (Staelens 40, Verheyen 80)
Att: 9,700

G ENT 2 (De Meyer 60, De Vreese 80)
RWDM 0 Att: 4,500

ANDERLECHT 7 (Pagal og 4, Babayaro 14, De Bilde 16, 45, 48, Versavel 53, Bosman 72)
SERAING 0 Att: 17,500

ANTWERP 1 (Owolabi 59)
CHARLEROI 0 Att: 3,000

BEVEREN 0
ST TRUIDEN 2 (Nielsen 67, Daelmans 70) Att: 3,000

LOMMEL 1 (Waligora 82)
EENDRACHT AALST 0 Att: 4,000

STANDARD 2 (Wilmots 19, pen 80)
LIERSE 0 Att: 10,000

CERCLE BRUGES 4 (Shehu 40, 43, Lauwers 74, 80)
WAREGEM 1 (Kubica 50) Att: 4,000

HARELBEKE 1 (Deltour 72)
EKEREN 2 (Lukaku 31, Hofmans 62) Att: 3,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WEEKEND

CHARLEROI 5 (Krncevic 31, Casto 38, Gerard pen 49, Brogno 62, 83)
LOMMEL 0 Att: 5,500

LIERSE 0
CERCLE BRUGES 1 (Claeys 28) Att: 5,000

SERAING 1 (Jurcic og 51)
BEVEREN 0 Att: 10,000

ST TRUIDEN 2 (Van Houdt 2, Curto 15)
HARELBEKE 0 Att: 5,500

CLUB BRUGGE 2 (De Bilde pen 13, Vermant 79)
ANDERLECHT 1 (Staelens 58) Att: 18,000

EENDRACHT AALST 2 (Van Wambeke 31, Paas 65)
GENT 2 (Katana 3, De Meyer 68) Att: 7,000

EKEREN 2 (Lukaku 81, 90)
ANTWERP 0 Att: 6,000

RWDM 3 (Nyyssonen 50, 75, Desmets 88)
STANDARD 1 (Schepens 60) Att: 8,000

WAREGEM 0
MECHELEN 1 (Dodik 74) Att: 3,500

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

WEEKEND

GENT 1 (Gerard og 86)
CHARLEROI 0 Att: 7,000

ANDERLECHT 3 (Versavel 15, Walem 37, Obiorah 89)
MECHELEN 1 (Gysbrechts 32) Att: 19,000

ANTWERP 2 (Owolabi 7, Nielsen 27)
ST TRUIDEN 0 Att: 4,000

BEVEREN 3 (Goots 44, 45, Vanmaele 90)
CLUB BRUGGE 5 (Verheyen 3, De Brul 34, Staelens 55 pen, Stanic 70, Spehar 88) Att: 8,000

LIERSE 1 (Rekdal pen 4)
WAREGEM 1 (Kubica 40) Att: 4,500

LOMMEL 2 (Cannaerts 25, Waligora 68)
EKEREN 1 (Radzinski 9) Att: 6,000

STANDARD 2 (Wilmots 42, Goossens 86)
EENDRACHT AALST 1 (Vanderhaeghe 80) Att: 9,000

CERCLE BRUGES 0
RWDM 1 (Pierre 8) Att: 4,000

HARELBEKE 2 (Ngonge 54, Kubik 73)
SERAING 1 (Debusschere 78) Att: 3,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	24	17	5	2	60	23	56
Anderlecht	24	16	5	3	63	25	51
Lierse	24	10	8	6	38	30	38
Cercle Bruges	24	9	10	5	37	31	37
Standard Liege	24	9	9	6	35	28	36
RWDM	24	9	9	6	27	24	36
Ekeren	24	9	7	8	37	30	34
Charleroi	24	8	9	7	41	39	33
Mechelen	24	9	5	10	28	35	32
Lommel	24	9	5	10	27	35	32
Gent	24	8	8	8	30	35	32
Harelbeke	24	9	3	12	28	33	30
Antwerp	24	8	6	10	30	32	30
Eendracht Aalst	24	7	7	10	33	35	28
St Truiden	24	7	6	11	29	43	27
Seraing	24	6	4	14	29	51	22
Beveren	24	4	7	13	23	39	19
Waregem	24	3	7	14	21	48	16

ENGLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

MIDWEEK

WEST HAM 0
MAN UTD 1 (Cantona 8) Att: 24,197

COCA-COLA [LEAGUE] CUP - QUARTER-FINAL REPLAY

BIRMINGHAM 2 NORWICH 1

FA CUP - 3RD RND REPLAY

OLDHAM ATHLETIC 2 BARNSLEY 1

FA CUP - 4TH RND

EVERTON 2 PORT VALE 2

READING 0 MAN UTD 3

SHEFFIELD UTD 0 ASTON VILLA 1

TOTTENHAM 1 WOLVES 1

POSTPONED: **BOLTON v LEEDS, CHARLTON v BRENTFORD, COVENTRY v MAN CITY, HUDDERSFIELD v PETERBOROUGH, IPSWICH v WALSALL, MIDDLESBROUGH v WIMBLEDON, NOTTM FOREST v OXFORD UTD, SHREWSBURY v LIVERPOOL, SOUTHAMPTON v CREWE, SWINDON v OLDHAM, WEST HAM v GRIMSBY TOWN**

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

MIDWEEK

NOTTM FOREST 2 (Campbell 38, Roy pen 56)
LEEDS 1 (Palmer 54) Att: 24,465

ASTON VILLA 0
LIVERPOOL 2 (Collymore 62, Fowler 66) Att: 39,332.

WEST HAM 3 (Rieper 46, Cottee 60, Dowie 86)
COVENTRY 2 (Dublin 62, Whelan 82) Att: 18,884

SOUTHAMPTON 1 (Shipperley 66)
MAN CITY 1 (Rosler 84) Att: 15,712

FA CUP - 4TH RND

QPR 1 CHELSEA 2

WEEKEND

ARSENAL 1 (Bergkamp 24)
COVENTRY 1 (Whelan 23) Att: 35,623

ASTON VILLA 3 (Yorke 11, 23, Wright 62)
LEEDS 0 Att: 35,982

BLACKBURN 3 (Shearer 12, 83, 90)
BOLTON 1 (Green 29) Att:30,419

LIVERPOOL 0
TOTTENHAM 0 Att: 40,628

MAN CITY 2 (Clough 25, Symons 50)
QPR 0 Att: 27,509

NEWCASTLE 2 (Ferdinand 55, Clark 90)
SHEFFIELD WED 0 Att: 36,567

SOUTHAMPTON 2 (G. Watson 46, Magilton 77)
EVERTON 2 (Stuart 52, Horne 56) Att: 15,136

WEST HAM 1 (Slater 19)
NOTTM FOREST 0 Att: 21,257

WIMBLEDON 2 (Gayle 68, Euell 77)
MAN UTD 4 (Cole 41, Beckham 45, Cantona 71, 81 pen) Att: 25,380

CHELSEA 5 (Peacock 29, 39, 55, Spencer 32, Furlong 53)
MIDDLESBROUGH 0 Att: 21,060

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

MIDWEEK

FA CUP - 4TH RND

CHARLTON 3 BRENTFORD 2

COVENTRY 2 MAN CITY 2

HUDDERSFIELD 2 PETERBOROUGH 0

MIDDLESBROUGH 0 WIMBLEDON 0

NOTTM FOREST 1 OXFORD UTD 1

SOUTHAMPTON 1 CREWE 1

WEST HAM 1 GRIMSBY TOWN 1

POSTPONED: **BOLTON v LEEDS, IPSWICH v WALSALL, SHREWSBURY v LIVERPOOL, SWINDON v OLDHAM**

FA CUP - 4TH RND REPLAYS

WOLVES 0 TOTTENHAM 2

PORT VALE v EVERTON – ***postponed***

COCA-COLA [LEAGUE] CUP - SEMI-FINAL, 1ST LEG

BIRMINGHAM 1 (Francis 27)
LEEDS 2 (Yeboah 54, White 72 og) Att: 24,781

WEEKEND

BOLTON 0
ASTON VILLA 2 (Yorke 40, 53) Att: 18,099

COVENTRY 1 (Whelan 44)
CHELSEA 0 Att: 20,639

EVERTON 0
MAN CITY 2 (Parkinson 33, Hincliffe pen 47)
Att: 37,354

MAN UTD 1 (Sharpe 15)
BLACKBURN 0 Att: 42,681

MIDDLESBROUGH 1 (Beresford og 37)
NEWCASTLE UTD 2 (Watson 74, Ferdinand 78) Att: 30,011

NOTTM FOREST 0
ARSENAL 1 (Bergkamp 60) Att: 27,222

SHEFFIELD WED 2 (Degryse 50, Watts 85)
WIMBLEDON 1 (Gayle 61) Att: 19,085

QPR 1 (Dichio 66)
LIVERPOOL 2 (Wright 16, Fowler 31) Att: 18,045

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

TOTTENHAM 0
WEST HAM 1 (Dani 5) Att: 29,782

COCA-COLA [LEAGUE] CUP - SEMI FINAL 1ST LEG

ARSENAL 2 (Bergkamp 26, 32)
ASTON VILLA 2 (Yorke 39, 72) Att: 37,562

FA CUP - 4TH RND

BOLTON 0 LEEDS 1

IPSWICH 1 WALSALL 0

SHREWSBURY 0 LIVERPOOL 4

SWINDON 1 OLDHAM 0

FA CUP - 4TH RND REPLAYS

CREWE 2 SOUTHAMPTON 3

GRIMSBY 3 WEST HAM 0

MAN CITY 2 COVENTRY 1

OXFORD 0 NOTTM FOREST 3

PORT VALE 2 EVERTON 1

WIMBLEDON 1 MIDDLESBROUGH 0

WEEKEND

CHELSEA 1 (Peacock 9)
WEST HAM 2 (Dicks 62, Williamson 72) Att: 25,252

MIDDLESBROUGH 1 (Pollock 36)
BOLTON 4 (Blake 12, Coleman 45, De Freitas 62, Lee 73) Att: 29,354

SHEFFIELD WED 1 (Hyde 22)
QPR 3 (Barker 33, 67, Goodridge 87) Att: 22,442

FA CUP - 5TH RND

IPSWICH 1 ASTON VILLA 3

SWINDON 1 SOUTHAMPTON 1

HUDDERSFIELD 2 WIMBLEDON 2

MAN UTD 2 MAN CITY 1

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Newcastle	27	19	4	4	52	25	61
Manchester Utd	28	17	6	5	55	29	57
Liverpool	27	15	7	5	53	24	52
Aston Villa	26	13	7	6	37	21	46
Tottenham	27	12	9	6	34	25	45
Arsenal	27	12	8	7	35	25	44
Everton	28	12	7	9	42	30	43
Chelsea	28	11	9	8	34	30	42
Blackburn	27	12	5	10	42	31	41
Nottm. Forest	27	10	10	7	35	38	40
West Ham	28	11	5	12	31	37	38
Leeds Utd	25	10	5	10	31	37	35
Middlesbrough	28	9	7	12	28	37	34
Sheffield Wed	27	7	8	12	36	43	29
Southampton	26	5	10	11	27	39	25
Wimbledon	27	6	7	14	39	55	25
Coventry	27	5	10	12	33	49	25
Manchester City	27	6	7	14	19	39	25
QPR	27	6	3	18	22	41	21
Bolton	28	4	4	20	28	58	16

FRANCE

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

WEEKEND

AUXERRE 1 (Lamouchi 26)

LE HAVRE 0 Att: 6,000

BASTIA 0
GUINGAMP 1 (Gravelaine 90) Att: 3,000

BORDEAUX 3 (Poincon 42, Tholot 62, Friis-Hansen 69)
GUEUGNON 1 (Tholot 57) Att: 11,629

LILLE 0
MONACO 0 Att: 7,500

MARTIGUES 2 (Soler 10, Tiehi 17)
STRASBOURG 0 Att: 3,500

NICE 1 (Ipoua 47)
MONTPELLIER 2 (Sanchez 31, Robert 59) Att: 4,281

PARIS SG 2 (Loko 43, 60)
CANNES 1 (Charvet 78) Att: 33,436

ST ETIENNE 0
NANTES 0 Att: 8,630

RENNES 2 (Cyprien 1, Andre 74)
LENS 1 (Vairelles 79) Att: 6,694

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

MIDWEEK

LEAGUE CUP - QUARTER-FINALS

CANNES 1 (Compan 30)
LE HAVRE 0 Att: 3,000

GUINGAMP 1 (Coridon 89)
MARSEILLE 0 Att: 7,920

NIORT 0
METZ 2 (Blanchard 31, Adam 77) Att: 7,000

LYON 1 (Maurice 78)
MONACO 0 Att: 10,000

WEEKEND

FRENCH CUP - 2ND RND

NANTES 2 (Pedros 40, Guyot 120)
MONACO 2 (Scifo 68, 108 pen) Att: 6,070 *(aet)*
Monaco won 5-4 on pens

LE MANS 0
AUXERRE 2 (Guivarc'h 24, Cocard 33) Att: 9,500

NANCY 0
LILLE 0 Att: 4,052
Lille won 4-2 on pens

METZ 0
CAEN 1 (Arpinon 52 og) Att: 5,378

CANNES 0
SOCHAUX 1 (E. Mendy 6) Att: 2,000

PARIS SG 2 (N'Gotty 45, Rai 88 pen)
ANGERS 0 Att: 15,913

NICE 0
LAVAL 1 (Lobe 104 pen) Att: 2,463 *(aet)*

THOUARS 1 (Roux 113)
MARTIGUES 0 Att: 3,500 *(aet)*

TOULON 3 (Moses 28, Rebecq 71, Cabezas 104)
BORDEAUX 2 (Witschge 17, Tholot 49) Att: 13,000 *(aet)*

NIMES 3 (Prejet 25, Ramdane 50, Marx 75)
ST ETIENNE 1 (Moreau 51) Att: 5,262

POISSY 0
STRASBOURG 0 Att: 3,500
Strasbourg won 4-2 on pens

NIORT 1 (Gilha 52)
MULHOUSE 1 (Granon 56) Att: 1,508
Niort won 4-2 on pens

VALENCE 3 (Frechet 67, Quevedo 80, 87)
DIJON 0 Att: 1,000

PONTIVY 0
MARSEILLE 2 (Libbra 7, 72) Att: 16,262

BLENOD v LE HAVRE – ***postponed***

MONTPELLIER v ISTRES – ***postponed***

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

MIDWEEK

LENS 1 (Vairelles 48)
LILLE 1 (Sibierski 4) Att: 22,727

CANNES 1 (Ferhaoui 61)
BORDEAUX 1 (Witschge 80) Att: 3,000

LE HAVRE 0
NICE 0 Att: 6,390

LYON 5 (Maurice 8, 54 pen, Roy 31, Gava 72, Roche 86)
MARTIGUES 1 (Tiehi 9) Att: 4,000

MONACO 1 (Petit 67)
PARIS SG 0 Att: 8,000

NANTES 3 (Savinaud 2, Gourvennec 38, Da Rocha 49)
BASTA 1 (Drobnjak 34) Att: 8,000

GUEGNON v ST ETIENNE – ***postponed***

MONTEPLLIER v GUINGAMP – ***postponed***

RENNES v METZ – ***postponed***

STRASBOURG v AUXERRE – ***postponed***

WEEKEND

AUXERRE 2 (Cocard 13, Diomede 82)
LYON 0 Att: 10,000

BASTIA 3 (Drobnjak 25, Rodriguez 41, 63)
LENS 2 (Camara 87, Sikora 89) Att: 6,000

BORDEAUX 3 (Dogon 66, Witschge 73, Friis-Hansen 80)
LE HAVRE 1 (Daury 43) Att: 8,000

GUINGAMP 3 (Carnot pen 37, 81, Gravelaine 43)
NANTES 1 (Guyot 9) Att: 14,000

LILLE 2 (Boutoille 53, Sibierski 75)
GUEUGNON 0 Att: 4,000

MARTIGUES 1 (Tiehi pen 41)
RENNES 2 (Wiltord 67, Cyprien 72) Att: 3,000

NICE 2 (Collet 33, Nagbe 44)
STRASBOURG 2 (Zitelli 8, Sauzee 39) Att: 5,000

PARIS SG 2 (Dely Valdes 49, Llacer 76)
MONTPELLIER 3 (Sanchez 77, Lefevre 78, Robert 81) Att: 35,000

ST ETIENNE v CANNES – ***postponed***

FC METZ v MONACO – ***postponed***

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

LEAGUE CUP - SEMI-FINALS

GUINGAMP 1 (Gravelaine 41)
METZ 2 (Pires 33, Pouget 83) Att: 8,000

LYON 1 (Giuly 8)
CANNES 0 Att: 15,000

FRENCH CUP - 2ND RND

MONTPELLIER 2 (Sanchez 15, Delaye 82)
ISTRES 1 (Edouard 62) Att: 2,573

BLENOD 1 (Schmitt 85)
LE HAVRE 1 (Lagrange 38) Att: 3,500
Blenod won 4-3 on pens

WEEKEND

LENS 2 (Sikora 61, Vairelles 87)
NANTES 1 (Chanelet 83) Att: 24,000

CANNES 1 (Horlaville pen 76)
BASTIA 0 Att: 3,000

GUEUGNON 2 (Traore 37, Damburry 90)
GUINGAMP 2 (Fournier 3, Gravelaine 42) Att: 4,000

LE HAVRE 4 (Huysman 4, Daury 30, Caveglia 45, 90)
LILLE 1 (Hitoto 75) Att: 8,000

LYON 1 (Casanova 77)
NICE 0 Att: 10,000

METZ 2 (Mbloma 45, 78)
MARTIGUES 0 Att: 7,000

MONACO 2 (Ikpeba 6, Viaud 83)
ST ETIENNE 0 Att: 3,000

MONTPELLIER 3 (Sanchez 42, Pavon 66, Delaye 74)
BORDEAUX 0 Att: 10,000

RENNES 2 (Wiltord 27, Grassi pen 68)
AUXERRE 1 (Saib 82) Att: 15,000

STRASBOURG 1 (Leboeuf pen 42)
PARIS SG 0 Att: 20,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	28	14	9	5	50	25	51
Auxerre	27	15	3	9	44	25	48
Metz	25	13	8	4	26	16	47
Monaco	27	13	7	7	40	27	46
Lens	28	11	13	4	32	21	46
Montpellier	27	12	7	8	40	32	43
Guingamp	27	11	10	6	26	20	43
Rennes	27	11	9	7	33	31	42
Nantes	28	10	10	8	32	31	40
Bastia	28	11	5	12	37	37	38
Strasbourg	27	9	10	8	35	28	36
Nice	29	9	7	13	30	33	34
Lyon	27	7	12	8	31	31	33
Bordeaux	28	9	5	14	31	40	32
Le Havre	28	8	8	12	26	35	32
Cannes	28	8	6	14	31	41	30
Lille	28	6	10	12	21	37	28
St Etienne	27	5	11	11	27	41	26
Gueugnon	28	5	11	12	20	36	26
Martigues	28	6	3	19	22	47	21

GERMANY

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WEEKEND

SC FREIBURG 0
BORUSSIA MG 0 Att: 22,500

KAISERSLAUTERN 1 (Kuka 23)
BORUSSIA DORTMUND 1 (Ricken 9) Att: 38,500

KARLSRUHE 1 (Dickhaut og 84)
EINTRACT FRANKFURT 1 (Ritter og 12) Att: 19,000

1860 MUNICH 2 (Winkler pen 45, Nowak 58)
ST PAULI 0 Att: 26,100

HAMBURG 2 (Breitenreiter 85, Jahnig 88)
BAYERN MUNICH 1 (Scholl 28) Att: 57,000

FORTUNA v WERDER BREMEN – ***postponed***

BAYER LEVERKUSEN v HANSA ROSTOCK – ***postponed***

SCHALKE v KOLN – ***postponed***

UERDINGEN v STUTTGART – ***postponed***

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

KOLN 0
FORTUNA DUSSELDORF 0 Att: 22,000

WEEKEND

BAYERN MUNICH 1 (Scholl 54)
KARLSRUHE 4 (Dundee 15, 50, Bender 72, 78) Att: 35,000

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 1 (Rauffmann 45)
KFC UERDINGEN 0 Att: 12,600

VfB STUTTGART 2 (Herzog 5, Bobic 31)
1860 MUNICH 3 (Winkler 15, Bodden 21, Nowak 74) Att: 25,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bor. Dortmund	19	12	5	2	46	23	41
Bayern Munich	20	13	2	5	44	25	41
Borussia MG	19	9	3	7	28	31	30
Hamburg	18	7	8	3	31	24	29
Hansa Rostock	18	7	7	4	30	23	28
VfB Stuttgart	19	7	7	5	41	36	28
1860 Munich	20	7	6	7	30	29	27
Bayer Leverkusen	18	6	8	4	22	15	26
Schalke	18	6	7	5	21	25	25
Ein. Frankfurt	20	6	6	8	32	37	24
Karlsruhe	20	5	8	7	29	32	23
St Pauli	19	5	6	8	27	31	21
SC Freiburg	19	5	5	9	14	24	20
Kaiserslautern	19	3	10	6	19	25	19
Koln	18	3	9	6	18	22	18
Werder Bremen	18	3	9	6	18	24	18
Fortuna Dusseldorf	19	3	8	8	18	29	17
KFC Uerdingen	19	2	8	9	16	29	14

HOLLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

MIDWEEK

DUTCH CUP - 4TH RND

SC HERACLES 0
AJAX 3 (George 7, Kluivert 14, R de Boer 65)
Att: 7,500

DUTCH CUP - 5TH RND

AZ 67 ALKMAAR 0
SPARTA 1 (Dennis de Nooijer 50) Att: 4,700

DEN HAAG 1 (Van der Padt 86)
FC TWENTE 2 (Ellerman 88, Bosvelt 90) Att: 1,652

FEYENOORD 1 (Vos 5)
NAC 0 Att: 12,793

DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Paauwe 3)
PSV 3 (Nilis 34, Numan 39, Vink 77) Att: 6,700

HELMOND SPORT 1 (Schuman 43)
MVV 2 (Joordens 90, Schol og 93) Att: 1,500

RODA JC 1 (Roelofsen 84)
PEC ZWOLLE 1 (Bruin 27)
(aet) Att: 3,250
Roda JC won on pens

VVV 0
FORTUNA SITTARD 0
Aet Att: 1,700
VVV won on pens

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

WEEKEND

FORTUNA v AJAX – ***postponed***

GA EAGLES v NEC – ***postponed***

HEERENVEEN v WILLEM II – ***postponed***

NAC BREDA 2 (Arnold 33, 62)
DE GRAAFSCHAP 1 (Meijer 63) Att: 8,109

FEYENOORD 2 (Trustfull 60, Vos 79)
RODA JC 0 Att: 21,666

TWENTE v PSV – ***postponed***

UTRECHT 0
SPARTA 0 Att: 5,000

VITESSE 0
GRONINGEN 0 Att: 5,326

VOLENDAM v RKC – ***postponed***

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WEEKEND

WILLEM II 0
VITESSE ARNHEM 5 (Loeffen 22, Makaay 28, 60, Curovic 51, 55) Att: 6,400

NEC NIJMEGEN 0
FORTUNA SITTARD 2 (Van Ophuizen 3, Hamming 52) Att: 2,700

PSV 7 (Wouters 2, Cocu 14, 86, Eijkelkamp 17, Nilis 41, 73, Gudjohnsen 82)
VOLENDAM 0 Att: 23,200

RKC 1 Vrede 33)
FEYENOORD 1 (Obiku 63) Att: 5,300

DE GRAAFSCHAP v HEERENVEEN – ***postponed***

RODA JC v UTRECHT – ***postponed***

AJAX v NAC – ***postponed***

GRONINGEN v FC TWENTE – ***postponed***

SPARTA v GA EAGLES – ***postponed***

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	21	18	2	1	71	11	56
PSV Eindhoven	22	17	3	2	75	13	54
Feyenoord	23	11	7	5	46	29	40
Sparta Rotterdam	23	9	8	6	34	37	35
Willem II Tilburg	21	8	9	4	39	27	33
NAC Breda	22	8	9	5	34	23	33
Vitesse Arnhem	22	9	6	7	35	32	33
SC Heerenveen	21	8	8	5	34	38	32
Roda JC	21	7	8	6	23	23	29
RKC Waalwijk	22	8	5	9	26	30	29
Groningen	21	6	9	6	26	31	27
FC Twente	21	7	5	9	26	33	26
Fortuna Sittard	23	5	8	10	17	36	23
NEC Nijmegen	23	4	6	13	23	53	18
De Graafschap	21	3	6	12	25	45	15
Utrecht	21	3	6	12	16	39	15
Volendam	21	3	5	13	16	48	14
GA Eagles	19	2	6	11	22	40	12

ITALY

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

WEEKEND

ATALANTA 2 (Pisani 77, Morfeo pen 84)
AS ROMA 1 (Delvecchio 21) Att: 17,461

BARI 2 (Andersson 8, Protti 25)
TORINO 2 (Rizzitelli 7, Karic 70) Att: 25,136

FIORENTINA 1 (Batistuta 7)
VICENZA 1 (Di Carlo 46) Att: 36,499

INTER 1 (Branca 83)
PARMA 1 (Stoichkov 16) Att: 46,073

JUVENTUS 2 (Conte 34, Ferrara 62)
PIACENZA 0 Att: 38,036

LAZIO 4 (Signori pen 26, Casiraghi 28, 34, 45)
CAGLIARI 0 Att: 38,704

PADOVA 4 (Vlaovic 5, 66, Amoruso 48, Fiore 84)
NAPOLI 2 (Pizzi 53, Di Napoli 87) Att: 13,968

SAMPDORIA 2 (Balleri 11, Chiesa 59)
CREMONESE 0 Att: 22,244

UDINESE 0
MILAN 2 (Maldini 44, Boban 59) Att: 30,184

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

WEEKEND

CAGLIARI 0
FIORENTINA 0 Att: 17,609

CREMONESE 2 (Tentoni 45, Florjancic 89)
UDINESE 2 (Poggi 12, Bia 87 pen) Att: 5,100

LAZIO 4 (Signori pen 22, pen 27, 30, Boksic 79)
BARI 3 (Protti pen 9, 81 pen, Andersson 64)
Att: 38,535

MILAN 3 (Weah 6, Savicevic 56, Panucci 86)
AS ROMA 1 (Moriero 7) Att: 60,961

NAPOLI 2 (Boghossian 14, Paganin og 85)
ATALANTA 0 Att: 29,504

PARMA 1 (Lamonica og 19)
SAMPDORIA 0 Att: 23,275

PIACENZA 1 (A. Carbone 90)
INTER 0 Att: 16,074

TORINO 2 (Rizzitelli 11, Angloma 60)
PADOVA 0 Att: 18,608

VICENZA 2 (Otero pen 18, Murgita 48)
JUVENTUS 1 (Ravanelli 66) Att: 19,894

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WEEKEND

ATALANTA 0
MILAN 1 (Weah 1) Att: 25,298

BARI 0
PIACENZA 0 Att: 20,861

FIORENTINA 1 (Amoruso 26)
PARMA 0 Att: 36,925

INTER 4 (Ganz 33, 57 pen, Branca 68, 80)
NAPOLI 0 Att: 42,545

JUVENTUS 4 (Bonomi og 10, Ravanelli 22, Del Piero 79, Jugovic 90)
CAGLIARI 1 (Oliveiria 89) Att: 38,647

PADOVA 3 (Cuicchi 27, Vlaovic 38, Lopez 86 og)
VICENZA 2 (Murgita 89, Ambrosetti 90) Att: 19,218

AS ROMA 3 (Di Biagio 24, Balbo 32, Cappioli 89)
CREMONESE 0 Att: 46,438

SAMPDORIA 1 (Mancini 61)
TORINO 0 Att: 25,337

UDINESE 1 (Negro og 11)
LAZIO 1 (Fuser 90) Att: 11,620

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

ITALIAN CUP - SEMI-FINALS, 1ST LEG

BOLOGNA 1 (Paganin og 5)

ATALANTA 1 (Valentini 84) Att: 15,000

FIORENTINA 3 (Batistuta pen 14, 47, 86)
INTER 1 (Ganz 32) Att: 27,645

WEEKEND

CAGLIARI 3 (Napoli 37, Oliveira 70, Bisoli 86)
SAMPDORIA 0 Att: 16,475

CREMONESE 0
FIORENTINA 0 Att: 9,509

LAZIO 1 (Signori pen 83)
AS ROMA 0 Att: 69,603

MILAN 3 (Simone 7, 29 pen, Weah 88)
BARI 2 (Pedone 21, Sala 49) Att: 54,601

NAPOLI 0
JUVENTUS 1 (Ravanelli 80) Att: 62,127

PARMA 2 (Melli 11, Benarrivo 57)
PADOVA 1 (Kreek 89) Att: 22,641

PIACENZA 2 (Caccia 31, Piovani 61)
ATALANTA 2 (Vieri 17, Pisani 67) Att: 11,972

TORINO 0
INTER 1 (Branca 15) Att: 24,914

VICENZA 0
UDINESE 1 (Helveg 85) Att: 16,756

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	23	14	8	1	37	17	50
Fiorentina	23	13	6	4	38	20	45
Parma	23	11	9	3	33	19	42
Lazio	23	11	6	6	45	26	39
Juventus	23	11	6	6	36	23	39
Internazionale	23	9	8	6	30	18	35
AS Roma	23	9	7	7	29	22	34
Vicenza	23	8	8	7	24	22	32
Sampdoria	23	8	7	8	33	33	31
Udinese	23	8	7	8	26	29	31
Napo

BARCELONA BEAT REAL MADRID 3-0 . . . NUMANCIA'S SPANISH CUP RUN ENDS . . . EUROPEAN TABLES . . . UDOVIC HITS SIX FOR SLOVENIA AGAINST ICELAND . . .

SPORTING BRAGA 1 (Barroso pen 51)
GIL VICENTE 1 (Tuck 77)

FARENSE 1 (Marco Nuno 70)
BELENENSES 3 (Cesar Brito 24, Paulo Madeira pen 63, Giovanella 74)

UNIAO LEIRIA 1 (Mauricio 69)
VITORIA GUIMARAES 2 (Edinho 9, Dane 55)

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

MIDWEEK

CAMPOMAIORENSE 0
SPORTING LISBON 1 (Yordanov 84)

PORTUGUESE CUP - 5TH RND

PORTIMONENSE 0 UNIAO LEIRIA 1

PORTUGUESE CUP - 5TH RND REPLAY

FC PORTO 1 LAMEGO 0

WEEKEND

SPORTING LISBON 5 (Amunike 7, 16, Alfonso Marins 9, Paulo Alves 63, Yordanov 89)
FARENSE 0

VITORIA GUIMARAES 6 (Ricardo 4, Edinho 18, 56, 61 pen, Paneira 44, Capucho 54)
MARITIMO 0

BELENENSES 1 (Giovanella 61)
BENFICA 0

DESP. CHAVES 1 (Miner pen 50)
SPORTING BRAGA

ESTRELA AMADORA 2 (Marquinhos 27, Renato 71)
UNIAO LEIRIA 4 (Mauricio 8, El Khalej 14, 49, Mauricio 80)

GIL VICENTE 3 (Stevanovic 37, Janovic 60, Tuck 79)
CAMPOMAIORENSE 1 (Stevanovic 37)

LECA 0
BOAVISTA 2 (Sergio Duarte 7, Artur pen 55)

FC PORTO 6 (Joao Manuel Pinto 4, Rui Barros 10, Drulovic 55, 83, Quinzinho 69 Jorge Couto 85)
FELGUEIRAS 2 (Lewis 71, 76)

TIRSENSE 2 (Caetano 8, Noverca 43)
SALGUEIROS 0

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

WEEKEND

BOAVISTA 1 (Sanchez 75)
FC PORTO 1 (Lipcsei 90)

BENFICA 0
SPORTING LISBON 0

CAMPOMAIORENSE 2 (Arriaga 16, Hasselbaink 85)
DESP. CHAVES 1 (Rui Alberto 80)

FELGUEIRAS 0
TIRSENSE 1 (Eusebio 68)

MARITIMO 1 (Edmilsson 61)
ESTRELA AMADORA 1 (Paulo Ferreira 87)

SALGUEIROS 1 (Toni 29)
VITORIA GUIMARAES 2 (Capucho 13, Edinho 90)

SPORTING BRAGA 3 (Karoglan 55, Andersson 63, Bruno 88)
LECA 0

UNIAO LEIRIA 1 (Raul og 75)
BELENENSES 0

FARENSE 5 (Helcinho 16, Cacioli 46, 54, Christian 65, Marco Nuno 50)
GIL VICENTE 0

PORTUGUESE CUP - 5TH RND REPLAY

BENFICA 3 FARENSE 0

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	23	19	4	0	62	6	61
Boavista	23	14	6	3	41	17	48
Sporting Lisbon	23	14	5	4	47	17	47
Benfica	23	14	5	4	37	22	47
Vit. Guimaraes	23	11	4	8	36	26	37
Maritimo	23	11	4	8	33	30	37
Belenenses	23	10	6	7	33	21	36
Uniao Leiria	23	10	2	11	28	40	32
Sporting Braga	23	8	7	8	27	28	31
Salgueiros	23	6	11	6	26	27	29
Felgueiras	23	6	7	10	24	31	25
Estrela Amadora	23	5	8	10	24	37	23
Gil Vicente	23	5	8	10	21	35	23
Leca	23	6	4	13	18	36	22
Tirsense	23	5	6	12	18	36	21
Farense	23	5	3	15	20	35	18
Desp. Chaves	23	4	6	13	25	41	18
Campomaiorense	23	5	2	16	18	51	17

SCOTLAND

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

MIDWEEK

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND

CALEDONIAN THISTLE 1 EAST FIFE 1
HIBERNINAN 0 KILMARNOCK 2

RAITH ROVERS 3 QUEENS PARK 0
ROSS COUNTY 0 FORFAR 3
KEITH 1 RANGERS 10
WHITEHILL WELLFARE 0 CELTIC 3

POSTPONED: **BERWICK v DUNDEE UTD, CLYDE v DUNDEE, CLYDEBANK v STIRLING, DUMBARTON v AIRDRIE, DUNFERMLINE v ST MIRREN, FALKIRK v STENHOUSEMUIR, MORTON v MONTROSE, HAMILTON v ST JOHNSTONE, HEARTS v PARTICK**

WEEKEND

FALKIRK 0
MOTHERWELL 1 (McLaughlin og 36) Att: 3,500

KILMARNOCK 1 (Wright 82)
ABERDEEN 1 (Irvine 4) Att: 6,703

RAITH ROVERS 0
PARTICK THISTLE 2 (McDonald 73, 89) Att: 3,651

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

MIDWEEK

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND

CLYDE 3 DUNDEE 1

CLYDEBANK 0 STIRLING ALBION 1

DUMBARTON 1 ARDRIE 3

FALKIRK 0 STENHOUSEMUIR 2

HAMILTON 0 ST JOHNSTONE 1

HEARTS 1 PARTICK THISTLE 0

MOTHERWELL 0 ABERDEEN 2

WEEKEND

CELTIC 2 (Van Hooijdonk 60, McStay 67)
HIBERNIAN 1 (D. Jackson) Att: 37,142

FALKIRK 4 (Finniegan 9, Craig 30, Iorfa 53, Kirk 59)
KILMARNOCK 2 (Wright 7, 10) Att: 4,143

HEARTS 2 (Robertson pen 43, Locke 53)
RAITH ROVERS 0 Att: 10,183

PARTICK THISTLE 1 (R. McDonald 34)
RANGERS 2 (Gascoigne 27, 36) Att: 16,523

MOTHERWELL v ABERDEEN – *postponed*

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

MIDWEEK

ABERDEEN 1 (Windass 14)
RAITH ROVERS 0 Att: 9,000

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND

BERWICK v DUNDEE UTD – *postponed*

DUNFERMLINE v ST MIRREN – *postponed*

MORTON v MONTROSE – *postponed*

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND REPLAY

EAST FIFE v CALEDONIAN T – *postponed*

WEEKEND

FALKIRK 0
CELTIC 0 Att: 10,400

RANGERS 3 (Ferguson 2, McLaren 65, McCoist pen 77)
MOTHERWELL 2 (Martin 53, Falconer 69) Att: 45,566

HEARTS 1 (Irvine og 30)
ABERDEEN 3 (Windass 3, Shearer 20, Glass 69) Att: 14,314

PARTICK 0
KILMARNOCK 1 (Black pen 5) Att: 5,000

RAITH ROVERS 1 (Kirkwood 39)
HIBERNIAN 0 Att: 4,832

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND

BERWICK 1 DUNDEE UTD 2

DUNFERMLINE 3 ST MIRREN 0

MORTON 1 MONTROSE 1

SCOTTISH CUP - 3RD RND REPLAYS

MONTROSE 3 MORTON 2

EAST FIFE 1 CALEDONIAN 1 *(aet)*
Caledonian Thistle won on pens

SCOTTISH CUP - 4TH RND

AIRDRIE 2 FORFAR ATHLETIC 2

CELTIC 2 RAITH ROVERS 0

CLYDE 1 RANGERS 4

DUNDEE UTD 1 DUNFERMLINE 0

KILMARNOCK 1 HEARTS 2

ST JOHNSTONE 3 MONTROSE 0

STENHOUSEMUIR 0 CALEDONIAN 1

STIRLING ALBION 0 ABERDEEN 2

WEEKEND

MOTHERWELL 1 (Burns 65)
ABERDEEN 0 Att: 4,500

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	27	20	5	2	61	16	65
Celtic	27	18	8	1	49	19	62
Aberdeen	27	12	4	11	38	30	40
Hearts	27	12	4	11	42	40	40
Hibernian	27	10	6	11	36	44	36
Raith Rovers	27	9	5	13	26	39	32
Kilmarnock	27	8	6	13	32	43	30
Motherwell	27	5	10	12	18	31	25
Falkirk	27	6	5	16	24	41	23
Partick Thistle	27	6	5	16	18	41	23

SPAIN

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

MIDWEEK

ATHLETIC BILBAO 0
REAL MADRID 5 (Zamorano 14, Laudrup 58, 78, Raul 74, Michel 88) Att: 30,000

ATLETICO MADRID 2 (Penev 4, Kiko 88)
RACING SANTANDER 0 Att: 30,000

CELTA VIGO 2 (Eusebio 22, Ratkovic 30)
SALAMANCA 1 (Claudio 37) Att: 14,000

LA CORUNA 2 (Aldana 42, Bebeto 52)
COMPOSTELA 0 Att: 28,000

ESPANYOL 2 (Lardin 74, Pochetino 89)
TENERIFE 1 (Mata 32) Att: 20,000

RAYO VALLECANO 1 (Guilherme 51)
REAL OVIEDO 2 (Armando 6, Oli 68) Att: 6,000

VALLADOLID 2 (Quevedo 64, Benjamin 82)
VALENCIA 5 (Galvez 4, 22, 58, Fernando 24, 54) Att: 16,000

ZARAGOZA 1 (Poyet 62)
REAL BETIS 2 (Jarni 8, Alfonso 40) Att: 22,000

SEVILLA 1 (Suker 25)
ALBACETE 1 (Luna 65) Att: 29,000

SPORTING GIJON 1 (Loren og 48)
REAL SOCIEDAD 1 (Craioveanu 9) Att: 17,300

MERIDA 0
BARCELONA 0 Att: 15,000

WEEKEND

SALAMANCA 0
LA CORUNA 5 (Aldana 15, 37, Bebeto 38, 80, Manjarin 60) Att: 18,000

ALBACETE 0
ESPANYOL 0 Att: 13,500

ATLETICO MADRID 4 (Kiko 16, Pantic 43, Penev 67, Biagini 71)
ATH BILBAO 1 (Etxeberria 28) Att: 32,000

BARCELONA 3 (Oscar 12, De La Pena 57, 61)
ZARAGOZA 1 (Higuera 58) Att: 80,000

COMPOSTELLA 1 (Villena pen 60)
VALLADOLID 3 (Peternac 5, Quevedo 19, Fernando 57) Att: 10,000

SANTANDER 1 (Mutiu 14)
GIJON 1 (Hugo Perez 30) Att: 16,000

SEVILLA 0
RAYO VALLECANO 0 Att: 3,000

REAL OVIEDO 1 (Carlos 39)
REAL MADRID 2 (Raul 8, 80) Att: 21,000

REAL SOCIEDAD 1 (Craioveanu 41)
SEVILLA 0 Att: 21,000

TENERIFE 1 (Mata 28)
CELTA VIGO 0 Att: 12,000

VALENCIA 4 (Poyatos 30, Mijatovic 35, 66 pen, Galvez 70)
MERIDA 1 (Corino 74) Att: 45,000

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3

MIDWEEK

SPANISH CUP - QUARTER-FINALS, 1ST LEG

SEVILLA 1 (Monchu 19)
VALENCIA 1 (Mijatovic pen 34) Att: 29,177

ESPANYOL 0
ZARAGOZA 0 Att: 18,000

TENERIFE 0
ATLETICO MADRID 0 Att: 20,000

NUMANCIA 2 (Quique 2, Movilla 89)
BARCELONA 2 (Moreno 49, 56) Att: 15,000

WEEKEND

ZARAGOZA 4 (Poyet 26, Morientes 70, 76, 86)
VALENCIA 1 (Galvez 67) Att: 33,000

SPORTING GIJON 1
ATLETICO MADRID 2 (Pantic 25, Caminero 67) Att: 24,100

ATHLETIC BILBAO 0
REAL OVIEDO 1 (Suarez 37) Att: 25,000

CELTA VIGO 2 (Gudelj pen 37, Milojevic 72)
ALBACETE 2 (Zalazar pen 47, 81) Att: 16,000

LA CORUNA 1 (Manjarin 63)
TENERIFE 1 (Aguilera 25) Att: 25,000

ESPANYOL 0
REAL SOCIEDAD 0 Att: 25,000

MERIDA 0
COMPOSTELA 2 (Christensen 67, Paniagua 88) Att: 14,000

RAYO VALLECANO 1 (Aquino 28)
BARCELONA 1 (De la Pena 75) Att: 15,000

REAL MADRID 4 (Sanchis 7, Raul 40, Zamorano 55, Redondo 81)
BETIS 2 (Stosic 29, Alfonso 33) Att: 95,000

VALLADOLID 1 (Benjamin 79)
SALAMANCA 0 Att: 25,000

SEVILLA 0
RACING SANTANDER 1 (Mutiu 24) Att: 34,219

WEEK ENDING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

WEEKEND

ATLETICO MADRID 0
SEVILLA 1 (Moya 77) Att: 50,000

BARCELONA 3 (Kodro 37, 90, Figo 71)
REAL MADRID 0 Att: 110,000

VALENCIA 3 (Mijatovic 11, Camarasa 27, Eskurza 72)
RAYO VALLECANO 0 Att: 45,000

ALBACETE 1 (Zalazar pen 33)
LA CORUNA 0 Att: 12,000

COMPOSTELA 3 (Villena 46, Fabiano 66, Ohen 89)
REAL ZARAGOZA 2 (Morientes 32, Rambert 45) Att: 10,500

RACING SANTANDER 1 (Villabona 44)
ESPANYOL 1 (Pacheta 60) Att: 13,208

REAL BETIS 2 (Pier 44, Alexis pen 86)
REAL OVIEDO 1 (Losada 64) Att: 35,000

SOCIEDAD 3 (Craioveanu 22, 73, Alejo og 86)
CELTA VIGO 1 (Milojevic 90) Att: 20,000

SALAMANCA 2 (Barbara 29, 70)
MERIDA 2 (Corino 59, Prieto 72) Att: 15,000

SPORTING GIJON 1 (Yekini 55)
BILBAO 2 (Etxeberria 27, Bolo 65) Att: 22,700

TENERIFE 1 (Juanele 4)
REAL VALLADOLID 0 Att: 12,000

WEEK ENDING, FEBRUARY 18

MIDWEEK

SPANISH CUP - QUARTER FINALS, 2ND LEG

VALENCIA 2 (Mijatovic 31, 68)
SEVILLA 0 Att: 40,000
Valencia won 3-1 on agg

BARCELONA 3 (Kodro 23, Oscar 26, Nadal 34)
NUMANCIA 1 (Barbarin 5) Att: 85,000
Barcelona won 5-3 on agg

REAL ZARAGOZA 1 (Lopez 18)
ESPANYOL 1 (Pacheta 7) Att: 15,000
Espanyol won on away goals

ATLETICO MADRID 3 (Penev 20, 41, 74)
TENERIFE 0 Att: 18,000
Atletico won 3-0 on agg

WEEKEND

REAL MADRID 0
VALENCIA 0 Att: 60,000

ZARAGOZA 1 (Guado 45)
SALAMANCA 1 (Stinga 23) Att: 18,000

ATHLETIC BILBAO 0
REAL BETIS 1 (Jarni 79) Att: 30,000

CELTA VIGO 0
SANTANDER 0 Att: 17,000

LA CORUNA 1 (David 65)
REAL SOCIEDAD 1 (Luis Perez 30) Att: 26,000

ESPANYOL 0
AT MADRID 2 (Kiko 43, Penev 75) Att: 35,000

MERIDA 2 (Prieto 34, 42)
TENERIFE 0 Att: 13,000

RAYO VALLECANO 0
COMPOSTELA 1 (Fabiano 43) Att: 9,000

REAL OVIEDO 1 (Oli 27)
BARCELONA 2 (Bakero 1, Amor 81) Att: 22,500

REAL VALLADOLID 3 (Raul 6, Peternac 47, Fernando 80)
ALBACETE 0 Att:16,000

SEVILLA 2 (Moya 48, Marcos 85)
SPORTING GIJON 0 Att: 33,222

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atletico Madrid	28	20	4	4	52	16	64
Barcelona	28	16	8	4	50	22	56
Compostela	28	16	5	7	40	33	53
Valencia	28	16	4	8	52	35	52
Espanyol	28	14	9	5	39	23	51
Real Madrid	28	12	8	8	52	40	44
Real Betis	28	11	11	6	38	31	44
Tenerife	28	11	9	8	42	42	42
Real Sociedad	28	11	8	9	36	36	42
La Coruna	28	11	7	10	45	25	40
Athletic Bilbao	28	8	10	10	30	39	34
Celta Vigo	28	8	9	11	29	35	33
Real Zaragoza	28	8	9	11	31	40	33
Racing Santander	28	7	10	12	29	45	31
Sevilla	28	7	9	12	28	40	30
Albacete	28	7	8	12	39	52	30
Real Oviedo	28	7	8	13	29	42	29
Sporting Gijon	28	8	4	16	35	42	28
Rayo Vallecano	28	7	7	14	29	47	28
Merida	28	5	12	11	23	38	27
Salamanca	28	5	9	14	38	49	24
Real Valladolid	28	5	8	15	33	48	23

EURO TABLES

ALBANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Teuta	21	13	5	3	32	13	34
SK Tirana	21	12	5	4	31	14	34
Flamurtari	21	11	3	7	26	20	28
Olimpik	21	11	3	7	29	18	27
Besa	21	10	5	6	22	14	27
Partizani	21	9	5	7	23	18	27
Apolonia	21	8	7	6	29	22	25
Sepeti	21	8	5	8	20	20	23
Shqipenja	21	8	4	9	19	20	23
Temerri	21	7	7	7	20	21	21
Albpetreli	21	7	5	9	17	24	20
Shkumbini	21	6	7	8	19	21	19
Vllaznia	21	6	6	9	18	25	19
Laci	21	7	3	11	25	32	17
Kastrioti	21	6	4	11	19	27	17
Elbasani	21	5	6	10	15	24	17
Beselidhja	21	5	7	9	10	22	17
Skenderbeu	21	5	3	13	18	37	13

3 pts away win, 2pts home win, 1pt draw

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski Sofia	17	12	2	3	27	12	38
Slavia Sofia	17	11	3	3	30	9	36
Neftohimik	17	11	2	4	35	20	35
Lokomotiv Sofia	17	10	4	3	31	14	34
CSKA Sofia	17	8	4	5	28	19	28
Etur Tirnovo	17	8	3	6	13	13	27
Spartak Varna	17	8	2	7	32	27	26
Dobrudzha	17	8	2	7	15	19	26
Levski Kyustendil	17	6	5	6	18	17	23
Montana	17	5	7	5	17	14	22
Lok. Plovdiv	17	6	1	10	14	29	19
Botev Plovdiv	17	5	2	10	19	26	17
Rakovski	17	4	2	11	18	26	14
Spartak Plovdiv	17	4	2	11	14	36	14
Lovech	17	2	7	8	10	20	13
Shumen	17	2	4	11	9	29	10

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia Zagreb	21	13	5	3	44	13	44
Hajduk Split	21	12	5	4	41	19	41
Osijek	21	12	3	6	37	18	39
Varteks Varazdin	21	10	6	5	27	20	36
Zagreb	21	7	8	6	24	23	29
Cibalia Vinkovci	21	6	9	6	26	34	27
Sibenik	21	7	5	9	25	28	26
Inker Zapresic	21	7	5	9	27	37	26
Segesta Sisak	21	7	4	10	31	35	25
Marsonia SB	21	6	2	13	15	33	20
Rijeka	21	4	5	12	25	41	17
Istra Pula	21	3	7	11	17	38	16

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slavia Prague	15	10	1	4	37	16	31
Sigma Olgmouc	16	9	3	4	30	17	30
Sparta Prague	17	8	5	4	30	21	29
Petra Drnovice	17	8	5	4	34	25	29
FK Jablonec	17	8	5	4	23	15	29
Slovan Liberec	16	8	3	5	20	18	27
Viktoria Lizkov	16	7	4	5	23	16	25
Viktoria Plzen	16	8	1	7	21	19	25
Kaucuk Opava	16	7	3	6	19	17	24
Union Cheb	17	6	6	5	24	24	24
Ceske Budejovice	17	7	2	8	24	29	23
FC Boby Brno	15	5	2	8	17	28	17
Banik Ostrava	16	4	4	8	22	24	16
JO Hradiste	17	2	6	9	12	36	12
Svit Zlin	16	2	5	9	5	23	11
Hradec Kralove	16	2	3	10	13	33	9

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK Athens	22	18	2	2	59	15	56
Panathinaikos	22	17	4	1	52	14	55
Olympiakos	22	15	6	1	52	18	51
OFI Crete	22	12	3	7	43	34	39
Edessaikos	22	9	6	7	33	36	33
Ionikos	22	8	5	9	32	32	29
Heraklis	22	8	5	9	28	29	29
Kalamata	22	7	7	8	29	35	28
Athinaikos	22	8	4	10	19	29	28
Panahaiki	22	7	5	10	20	31	26
Apollon	22	6	7	9	30	31	25
Skoda-Xanthi	22	6	7	9	27	35	25
Aris Salonika	22	6	7	9	22	30	25
Paniliakos	22	6	6	10	27	33	24
PAOK Salonika	22	6	8	7	25	27	23
Panionios	21	5	4	13	24	38	19
Larissa	21	4	5	13	17	44	17
Ethnikos	21	3	3	16	23	51	12

PAOK deducted 3pts for crowd trouble

ISRAEL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mac. Tel Aviv	18	15	2	2	41	13	47
Bet. Jerusalem	18	13	5	1	43	19	44
Mac. Haifa	18	2	6	1	53	24	42
Hap. Haifa	18	11	5	3	40	20	38
Mac. Petah Tikva	18	9	6	4	29	24	33
Hap. Tel Aviv	18	9	4	6	23	22	31
Hap. Petah Tikva	18	6	10	3	23	18	28
Mac. Herzliya	18	8	3	8	20	19	27
Bnei Yehuda	18	5	4	10	29	38	19
Hap. Beersheva	18	4	6	9	19	22	18
Ironi Rishon	18	5	3	11	15	25	18
Hap. Kfar Sava	18	5	3	11	19	31	18
Zafririm Holon	18	4	3	12	20	37	15
Hap. Beit She'an	18	3	6	10	17	34	15
Mac. Jaffa	18	4	2	13	16	37	14
Bet. Tel Aviv	18	3	4	12	21	45	13

MALTA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Valletta	11	8	2	1	30	9	26
Sliema Wands	11	8	1	2	35	12	25
Hibernians	11	6	4	1	22	10	22
Floriana	11	6	2	3	18	9	20
Hamrun Spartans	11	4	4	3	16	11	16
Birkirkara Luxol	11	4	2	5	17	14	14
Naxxar Lions	11	3	3	5	13	17	12
St Patrick's	11	3	0	8	12	32	9
Rabat Ajax	11	2	1	8	13	37	7
Zurrieq	11	1	1	9	11	35	4

NORTHERN IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Crusaders	20	12	3	5	30	21	39
Portadown	20	10	6	4	41	30	36
Glenavon	20	10	3	7	35	20	33
Glentoran	20	9	5	6	40	28	32
Linfield	20	8	6	6	26	24	22
Ards	20	5	5	10	23	29	20
Cliftonville	20	4	7	9	17	35	19
Bangor	20	3	3	14	13	38	12

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Patrick's Ath	25	14	7	4	37	28	49
Shelbourne	25	13	9	3	33	16	48
Bohemians	24	13	5	6	47	24	44
Sligo Rovers	25	11	7	7	32	28	40
Dundalk	25	9	8	8	33	31	35
Derry City	23	9	7	7	38	28	34
Shamrock Rov	24	9	6	9	20	24	33
Cork City*	24	9	7	8	27	25	31
UCD	25	8	5	12	23	27	29
Drogheda Utd	24	5	8	11	25	35	23
Athlone Town	25	4	5	16	25	47	17
Galway Utd	25	3	6	16	29	47	15

** = 3pts deducted for playing ineligible players*

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sion	1	1	0	0	1	0	24
Grasshopper	1	0	1	0	0	0	23
Neuchatel Xamax	1	0	1	0	0	0	22
Lucerne	1	0	0	1	0	1	20
Aarau	1	1	0	0	4	0	17
Basel	1	0	1	0	1	1	16
Servette	1	0	1	0	1	1	15
St Gallen	1	0	0	1	0	4	14

Points from regular season were halved and carried over

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	22	17	4	1	46	12	55
Trabzonspor	22	17	3	2	50	16	54
Besiktas	22	16	3	3	54	22	51
Galatasaray	22	15	2	5	49	25	47
Kocaelispor	22	8	9	5	30	26	33
Gaziantepspor	22	8	7	7	28	23	31
Antalyaspor	22	8	5	9	32	39	29
Genclerbirligi	22	7	7	8	31	35	28
Bursaspor	22	6	8	8	37	33	26
Samsunspor	22	8	2	12	27	30	26
Denizlispor	22	6	8	8	27	32	26
Ankaragucu	22	6	5	11	23	38	23
Karsiyaka	22	6	5	11	18	39	23
Istanbulspor	22	5	7	10	30	34	22
Altay	22	6	4	12	22	42	22
Vanspor	22	4	6	12	17	34	18
Kayserispor	22	3	8	11	23	43	17
Eskisehirspor	22	5	1	16	26	45	16

WALES

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barry Town	23	18	2	2	57	12	57
Conwy Utd	25	15	7	3	70	32	52
Fflint Town Utd	27	15	6	7	53	29	50
Newtown	24	14	5	5	38	17	47
Bangor City	28	14	5	9	52	48	47
Caernarfon Town	26	10	10	6	52	36	40
Ebbw Vale	25	10	7	8	34	30	37
Connah's Quay	23	9	9	5	46	37	36
Inter Cardiff	26	10	6	10	41	41	36
Caerews	24	11	3	10	53	62	36
Cwmbran Town	22	8	9	5	33	22	33
CPD Porthmadog	26	8	6	12	39	42	30
Holywell Town	27	8	6	13	40	51	30
Llansantffraid	22	7	5	10	35	35	26
Ton Pentre	24	6	8	10	29	40	26
Aberystwyth T	25	6	7	12	39	46	25
Rhyl	25	6	6	13	29	58	24
Briton Ferry Ath	24	6	5	13	35	64	23
Cemaes Bay	23	6	4	13	32	53	22
Afan Lido	24	5	5	14	19	48	20
Llanelli	25	4	5	16	37	60	17

YUGOSLAVIA

| | P | W | D | L | F |

JAPAN 4 (Yamaguchi 35, Takagi 62, 86, Moriyasu 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,396. ref: Berret (Aus)
Australia: Juric - Tobin, Ivanovic (Polak), Popovic, Bungley - Wade, Hooker, Mori, Blagojevic* - Trimboli (Lozanovski), Markovski (Awaritefe).
* = *Blagojevic sent off, 47min.*
Japan: Makawa - Sohma, Ihara, Omura (Sawada), Yanagimoto (Nakamura) - Yamaguchi (Honda), Moriyasu, Kitazawa (Morishima), Nanami - Takagi, Okano.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Feb 11 - Bangkok - Kings Cup
THAILAND 0
ROMANIA 3 (Ilie Mugural 2, 61, 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000
Thailand: Wacharapong Somcit - Kritsada Piandit, Sumet Akarapong, Natee Tongsukkao, Sanor Lonsawang, Natipong Sritong-In, Tawan Sripan, Surachai Jaturapattarapong, Kiatisuk Senamuang, Thawatchai Damrong-Ongtrakul, Surachai Jirasirichote.
Romania: Starciu - Prodan, Galca, Mugurel, Maier, Tane, Valvan, Papara, Serban, Danciulescu (Ion Valdoiu), Niculescu (Filipescu).

Feb 11 - Bangkok - Kings Cup
DENMARK 0
FINLAND 0
Att: 10,000
Denmark: Hogh - Laureen, L Olsen, Schjonberg, Steen Nielsen, A Nielsen, E Bo Andersen, Longstrup, Tur, Boye, Thorninger.
Finland: Laukkanen - H Ylonen, Karjalainen, Rissenen, Suominen, Gronlund, Hjelm, Jarvinen, Jalonen, Wiss, Hyrylainen.

Feb 11 - Valletta - Malta tmt
RUSSIA 3 (Igor Simutenkov 13, 77, Andrei Alenichev 18)
SLOVENIA 1 (Primoz Gliha 87 pen)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Agius (Mal)
Russia: Cherchesov (Kharin) - Radimov (Mamedeov), Nikiforov, Tetradze, Bushmanov (Chugainov) - Kanchelskis, Alenichev, Kechinov, Beschastnikh (Tikhonov) - Simutenkov, Radchenko.
Slovenia: Boskovic - Milanic (Galic), Englaro, Cifer, Binkovski - Ceh (Kokol), Novak, Zidan, Gasjer - Siljak (Valentincic), Gliha.

Feb 11 - Valletta - Malta tmt
MALTA 1 (Anton Zahra 69)
ICELAND 4 (Olafur Thordarsson 6, Thordur Gudjohnsson 27, 35, Arnar Gretarsson 45)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Khusainov (Rus)
Malta: Cini (Sullivan) - Vella, Buhagiar, Camilleri (Carabott; Suda) - De Bono, Buttigieg, Agius, Zammit, Turner - Brincat (Sant Fournier), Sultana.
Iceland: Kristinsson (Finnbogasson) - Gylfasson, Jonsson, Adolfsson, Gretarsson - Gunnlaugsson (Ingolfsson), Gislasson, Gudjohnsen (Sigurdsson) - Thordarsson (Kolvidsson), Sverrisson.

Feb 11 - Beirut - intl friendly
LEBANON 1 (Wartan Ghazarian 14)
ECUADOR 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Ayad (Leb)
Lebanon: Sakr - Yenkibarian, Guarbetian, Ayoub, Hijazi (Chahrour) - Hamze, Taha, Melikijan, Tekidbachian (Karbib) - Nazha (Chehab), Ghazarian.
Ecuador: Cevallos - Rivera, Obregon (Garay), Tenorio, Montano - Carabeli (Pazmino), Macias (Gonzalez), Batallas - Chala (P Hurtado), A Fernandez, E Hurtado.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Feb 12 - Lima - friendly intl
PERU 1 (Pinillos 71 pen)
BOLIVIA 3 (Baldivieso 26 pen, Paniagua 53, Castillo 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Feb 13 - Bangkok - Kings Cup
THAILAND 1 (Kiatisuk Senamuang 67)
DENMARK 3 (P Rasmussen 55, E Bo Andersen 69, Lonstrup 84)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000
Thailand: Wacharapong Somcit - Sumet Akarapong, Natee Tongsukkao, Sanor Longsawang, Natipong Sriting-In, Tawan Sripan, Surachai Jaturapattarapong, Kiatisuk Senamuang, Thawatchai Damrong-Ongtrakul (Chukiat Noosalung 70), Dusit Chalermsan, Surachai Jirasirichote.
Denmark: Krogh - Piechnik, L Olsen, Dethlefsen, Schjonberg, Steen Nielsen, E Bo Andersen, P Rasmussen (Nielsen 77), Tur, H Larsen, Tofting (Lonstrup).

Feb 13 - Bangkok - Kings Cup
FINLAND 1 (Koskinen 15)
ROMANIA 1 (Filipescu 36)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,000

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Feb 14 - Melbourne, Lakeside - friendly intl
AUSTRALIA 3 (Damien Mori 15, Joe Spiteri 70, Matthew Bingley 74)
JAPAN 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Simon.
Australia: Petkovic - Tobin, Ivanovic, Popovic, Hooker (Longo) - Lozanobvski, Polak, Wade (Bingley), Spink (Trimboli), Mori - Spiteri.
Japan: Makawa - Suzuki (Sohma), Ihara, Omura, Sawada (Yanagimoto) - Yamaguchi, Moriyasu (Honda), Kitazawa, Nanami (Okano) - Takagi, Miura.

Feb 14 - Coquimbo - friendly intl
CHILE 4 (Marcelo Salas 5, Pablo Galdamez 22 pen, Rodrigo Goldberg 47, 60)
PERU 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Olivetto (Arg)
Chile: Tapia - Cornejo, R Fuentes, Ardiman, Margas (Miranda) - Musrri (Galames), Parraguez, Valencia (Poirier), J Ramirez (Nunez) - Salas (Rosenthal), Goldberg.
Peru: Quesada - Jorge Soto, Dulanto, Reinoso, Ubillus - Jose Soto, Rodriguez (Rivera), Pinillos, P Zegarra (Ormeno) - Palacios (CArmona), R Zegarra (A Ramirez).

Feb 14 - Sucre - friendly intl
BOLIVIA 4 (Castillo 8, Tufino 56, Suarez 65, Etcheverry 72)
PARAGUAY 1 (Villamayor 54)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 8,000.

Feb 14 - Izmir - friendly intl
TURKEY 3 (Ertugrul 26 pen, 34 pen, Kemalletin 76)
BYELORUSSIA 2 (Belkevich 8, Stanuk 48)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 6,732. **Ref:** Kocev (Mac)
Turkey: Rustu - Recep, Alpay, Ogun - Arif, Tugay, Oguz (Bulent Uygun 46), Tolunay (Kemalletin 46), Abdullah - Hakan (Saffet 46), Ertugrul (Bulent Korkmaz 78).
Byelorussia: Satsunkevich - Gurenko, Kachkevich, Stanuk, Kulchi (Avluk 89) - Gerasimets, Maleyev, Dovnar (Ostrowski 46), Rodnonok - Belkevich, Kochuro (Velicko 46).

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Feb 16 - Bangkok - Kings Cup 3rd place
THAILAND 5 (Natipong Sritong-In 40, 51, 83, Thawatchai Damrong-Ongrakul 55, Kiatisak Senamuang 61)
FINLAND 2 (Harri Ylonen 31, Kari Rissanen 64)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,000.

Feb 16 - Bangkok - Kings Cup Final
ROMANIA 2 (Gabriel Popescu 9, 45)
DENMARK 1 (Stefan Hojer 90)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000
Denmark: Hogh - Piechnik, L Olsen, Schjonberg, Steen Nielsen (A Nielsen 59), E Bo Andersen (Thorninger 46), Lonstrup, P Rasmussen (Hojer 51), Tur, H Larsen, Boye.
Romania: Contra - Prodan, Dobos, Galca, Curt, Lacatus, Gabriel Popescu, Vladoiu (Niculescu 83), Mugurel Ilie (Serban 63), Tene, Filipescu.

Feb 16 - Riyadh - intl friendly
OMAN 0
ECUADOR 2 (E Hurtado 55, A Fernandez 70)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Ali Klifi (Qtr)
Oman: Said - Thouni, Taleb, Moubarak, Khamis - Dahi, Al Habsi, Soltane, Horr - Chambi, Salah.
Ecuador: Espinoza - Rivera, Tenorio, Montano, Pazmino - Garay, Carabali, Gonzalez, Batallas - A Fernandez, E Hurtado.

Feb 16 - Larnaca - intl friendly
ESTONIA 0
AZERBAIJAN 0
Att: 1,000.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Feb 19 - Hong Kong - Carlsberg Cup
JAPAN 5 (Yamaguchi 29, Takagi 31, 75, Omura 40, K Miura 71)
POLAND 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 12,000
Japan: Yanagimoto - Ihara, Yamaguchi, Moriyasu, Kitazawa, Takagi, K Miura, Soma, Nanami, Omura, Kojima.
Poland: Wozniak - Jaskuiski, Lapinski, Wegrzyn, Wojtala, Citko, Wyciszewski, S Czereszewski, R Czerwiec, Kaliciak, Skrzypek.

Feb 19 - Doha - intl friendly
QATAR 1 (A Hassan 90)
ECUADOR 1 (E Hurtado 14)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,000.
Ecuador: Espinoza - Wagner, Tenorio, Montano, Pazmino - Garay, Carabali, Gonzalez, Batallas - A Fernandez, E Hurtado.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Feb 20 - Limassol - intl friendly
CYPRUS 1 (Konstantinou 22)
ESTONIA 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Feb 21 - Nimes - intl friendly
FRANCE 3 (Loko 30 pen, 46, Zidane 49)
GREECE 1 (Alexandris 5)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 23,452. **Ref:** Polichroniou
France: Lama - Angloma (Leboeuf 46), Thuram, Desailly, Petit (Pouget 76), Karembu, Deschamps, Djorkaeff (Zidane 46), Pedros, Lamouchi (Laigle 72), Loko.
Greece: Atmatzidis - Apostolakis, Dabitzas, Zagorakis (Limperopoulos 76), Mahlas (Nikolaidis 46), Donis (Kostic 72), Ouzounidis, Kalitzakis (Konstantinidis 72), Alexandris, Kasapis, Vryzas.

Feb 21 - Haifa - intl friendly
ISRAEL 4 (Atar 23, Banin 30, Zohar 75, Turjeman 85)
LITHUANIA 2 (Visius 32, Rinkus 88)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Koren (Isr)
Israel: Ginzburg (Levy 46) - Halfon (Jano 46), Brumer, Shelah, Glam (A Harazi 65) - Banin, Klinger (Ben Shimon 63), Hazan, Berkowitz (Zohar 46) - Revivo, Atar (Turgeman 63).
Lithuania: Septila - Novikovas, Vainoras, Stonkus, Tereskinas - Sukristovas, Prikasivcius (Zotvatas 55), Rasanoskas, Rimkus - Yanauskas (Predikzas 46), Maculevicius.

Feb 21 - Oporto - intl friendly
PORTUGAL 1 (Folha 51)
GERMANY 2 (Moller 15, 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Boggi (Ita)
Portugal: Vitor Baia - Secretario (Helder 85), Dimas (Nelson 85), Fernando Couto, Jorge Costa, Oceano (Fernando Mendes 60), Paulo Sousa, Luis Figo (Vitor Paneira 46), Rui Costa (Antonio Capucho 65), Sa Pinto, Antonio Folha (Alves 60).
Germany: Kopke - Babbel, Ziege (Albertz 46), Kohler, Helmer, Sammer, Moller, Freund, Klinsmann, Hassler (Basler 70), Kuntz (Bierhoff 46).

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Feb 22 - Hong Kong - Carlsberg Cup final
SWEDEN 1 (Pringle 52)
JAPAN 1 (Omura 65)
HT: 0-0. **90min:** 1-1. **Att:** 15,000.
Aet, Sweden won 5-4 on pens

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Feb 23 - Kuwait - intl friendly
KUWAIT 0
ECUADOR 3 (Tenorio 5, E Hurtado 70, Batallas 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,000.
Kuwait: Fadli - Houssin, Doukhi, Bonayane, Hagi - Chimari, Marzouk, Wabrane, Souhi - Mubarak, Dawood.
Ecuador: Cevallos - Rivera, Tenrio, Montano, Pazmino - Garay, Carabali, Gonzalez, Batallas - A Fernandez, E Hurtado.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

feb 24 - Pyla - intl friendly
ESTONIA 2 (Krystal 13, Rajala 49)
FAROE ISLANDS 2 (Ioanessen 30, H Jarnskor 49)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,000.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Feb 25 - Brisbane - intl friendly
AUSTRALIA 0
SWEDEN 2 (Andreas Andersson 86, 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,500.

OTHER MATCHES

Feb 11 *(Brasilia)*: Brazil U23 2 Bulgaria 0 - *(Monterey Park, Calif)*: United States 0 S Korea U23 0.
Feb 14 *(Santa Ana, Calif)*: Mexico U23 1 S Korea U23 1.
Feb 18 *(Beirut)*: Lebanon 3 Lokomotiv Slavia 1.
Feb 19 *(Hong Kong, Carlsberg Cup)*: Hong Kong Lge XI 0 Sweden 1 (Alexandersson 65).
Feb 20 *(Felgueiras)*: Portugal U21 3 (Dani 25, Nuno Gomes 80, Bambo 83), Germany U21 3 (Breitenreiter 74, Baron 77, Beto og 89).
Feb 22 *(Carlsberg Cup, 3rd place play-off)*: Hong Kong Lge XI 0 Poland 1.

ASIAN CUP

Group 2 (Hong Kong): Hong Kong 8 Philippines 0; China 7 Macao 1; Macao 5 Philippines 1; China 2 Hong Kong 0.

Group 9 (Riyadh): S Arabia 4 Yemen 0; Yemen 1 Kyrghizstan 0; Saudi Arabia 3 Kyrghizstan 0; S Arabia 2 Kyrghizstan 0; Kyrghizstan 3 Yemen 1.

SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

Sao Paulo State Championship – 1st round

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras	6	5	1	0	22	3	16
Portuguesa	6	5	1	0	15	5	16
Corinthians	6	4	2	0	16	4	14
Sao Paulo	6	4	1	1	13	6	13
Santos	6	3	1	2	12	9	10
Mogi Mirim	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Juventus	6	3	0	3	6	8	9
Novorizontino	6	2	2	2	9	11	8
XV de Jau	6	2	0	4	5	15	6
Uniao Sao Joao	6	1	3	2	9	8	6
Rio Branco	6	1	2	3	5	9	5
Aracatuba	6	1	2	3	5	13	5
America	5	1	1	3	6	9	4
Botafogo	6	0	3	3	4	7	3
Ferroviaria	6	0	2	4	5	16	2
Guarani	6	0	2	4	3	15	2

Note: Top two teams in first stage and top two in second stage qualify for finals. If same team wins both stages they are automatic champions.

Rio de Janeiro Cup (after 3 games): 1) Botafogo 9pts; 2) Flamengo, Vasco da Gama 8; 4) Madureira 5; 5) Fluminense, Bangu 4; 7) America, Olaria 1.

VENEZUELA

First Division – closing championship Leaders
Group A: 1) Mineros de Guyana 11 pts.
Group B: 1) Minerven, Deportivo Italia 8.

MEXICO

First Division

Group1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Veracruz	26	12	5	9	35	32	41
Guadalajara	26	10	8	8	31	28	38
Univ.Nuevo Leon	26	9	11	6	28	32	38
Toluca	26	7	7	12	24	34	28
Santos	26	6	9	11	29	31	27
Group 2							
Celaya	26	10	10	6	35	32	40
America	26	9	12	5	46	32	39
Atlanta	26	6	8	12	30	43	26
Pueble	26	5	7	14	23	41	22
Morelia	26	5	6	15	27	47	21
Group 3							
Cruz Azul	26	10	12	4	45	25	42
UNAM	26	9	10	7	37	30	37
Leon	26	9	9	8	39	36	36
Monterrey	26	8	10	8	41	39	34
Group 4							
Neza	26	11	9	6	43	35	42
Necaxa	26	10	10	6	41	31	40
Atlas	26	10	9	7	37	37	39
UA Guadalajara	26	4	16	6	31	37	28

Top two of each group plus two others with best records qualify for play-offs.

HONDURAS

First Division
1) Motagua 37pts; 20 Olimpia 35; 3) Platense, Victoria 33; 5) Marathon 32; 6) Vida 23; 7) Real Maya, Real Espana, Independiente 20; 10) Broncos 16.

COSTA RICA

First Division
1) Alajuelense 59pts; 2) Herediano 55; 3) Saprissa 54; 4) Cartagines 51; 5) Belon 46; 6) Puntarenas 45; 7) Carmelita 39; 8) Remonense 38; 9) San Carlos 37; 10) Perez Zeledon 36; 11) Turialba 26; 12) Guanacaste 23.

EL SALVADOR

First Division
1) FAS 48pts; 2) L.A.Firpo, Aguila 43; 4) Marte 35; 5) Municipal Limeno 31; 6) Alianza 29; 7) ADET, Dragon 28; 9) El Roble 21; 10) Tiburones 19.

GUATEMALA

First Division – Final Round
1) Sacachispas 6pts; 2) Municipal, Amatitlan 5; 4) Xelaju 4; 5) Aurora 3; 6) Comunicaciones, Escuintla, Suchitepequez 2.

COLOMBIA

First Division – Closing championship
1) Independiente Medellin 22pts; 2) Deportivo Cali 21; 3) Nacional 17; 4) America 16; 5) Tolima 15; 6) Millonarios 13; 7) Atletico Junior, Pereira 12; 9) Union Magdalena, Huila, Independiente Santa Fe, Caldas 10; 13) Envigado 9; 14) Quindio 8; 15) Tulua 7; 16) Bucaramanga 5.
Overall standings: 1) Dep Cali 58 pts; 2) Nacional 49; 3) America 46; 4) Tolima 42; 5) Millonarios 40; 6) At. Junior, Union Magdalena 37; 8) Huila 34; 9) Indep. Santa Fe, Caldas, Independiente Medellin 33; 12) Envigado 31; 13) Pareira 30; 14) Quindio 29; 15) Bucaramanga 28; 16) Tulual 22. *(Top eight go into final round at end of season)*

MAJOR CLUB INTERNATIONALS

January: Palmeiras (Bra) 6 Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 1; Flamengo (Bra) 1 Palmeiras 1 *(Palmeiras win Euro-America Cup played in Brazil)*; Universidad Catolica (Chile) 2 Ferro Carril Oeste (Arg) 1; Universidad de Chile 0 Defensor Sporting (Uru) 0; Univ. de Chile 1 Internacional PA (Bra) 1; Univ. Chile 1 Gremio (Bra) 1.
Feb 6: Universidad Catolica (Chile) 1 Defensor Sporting (Uru) 0.

OTHER INTERNATIONALS

Jan 26: Lanus (Arg) 1 Armenian XI 2.
Jan 29: Estudiantes de la Plata (Arg) 2 Armenian XI 1.
Feb 2: Boca Juniors (Arg) 1 Armenian XI 1.

INTER-AMERICAN CUP

(1994 winners of Libertadores & CONCACAF Cups)

FEB 17 - SAN JOSE (C. RICA) - 1ST LEG

CARTAGINES (CR) 0
VELEZ SARSFIELD (Arg) 0
Ref: B. Archundia (Mex). **Att:** 14,500.
Cartagines: Barrantes, Contreras, Wood, Peynado, Hidalgo (Bennett 64), Dos Santos, A. Gomez, Rodriguez (Ferreira 83), Sanchez, Quiros (Everaldo 71), N. Gomez.
Velez Sarsfield: Chilavert, Zandona, Trotta *(sent off 85)*, Pellegrino, Cardozo, Herrera, Gomez, Morigi, Camps (Compagnucci 88), Pandolfi (Husain 86), Flores (Posse 74).

CONMEBOL MASTERS CUP

(CONMEBOL Cup winners in Sao Paulo, Brazil)
Feb 8: Sao Paulo (Bra) 7 Botafogo (Bra) 3.
Feb 9: Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 0 Rosario Central (Arg) 0 *(Atletico won 10-9 on pens)*.
Feb 11: *Final:* Sao Paulo 3 Atletico Mineiro 0.

U-23 INTERNATIONALS

Feb 7: Mexico 2 Norway 0; San Salvador 0 Colombia 3.
Feb 8: Bolivia 1 Ecuador 2; Uruguay 2 Romania 3.
Feb 10: Uruguay 1 Chile 0.
Feb 11: Peru 5 Romania 0; Ecuador 3 Venezuela 1.
Feb 12: Paraquay 2 Ecuador 2.
Feb 13: Bolivia 2 Romania 2.
Feb 14: Paraquay 1 Ecuador 0.
Feb 15: Mexico 1 South Korea 1.

MAJOR CLUB INTERNATIONALS

Feb 8: Once Caldas (Col) 1 Internacional PA (Bra) 1.
Feb 10: Estudiantes de La Plata (Arg) 0 Nacional (Uru) 0; Newall's OB (Arg) 2 O'Higgins (Chile) 0.
Feb 11: Defensor Sporting (Uru) 1 FC Oeste (Arg) 1 *(in Chile)*.
Feb 13: Universidad Catolica (Chi) 2 FC Oeste (Arg) 2; Universidad de Chile 1 Defensor Sporting (Uru) 2.
Feb 14: Huracan (Arg) 2 Ilwha Chunma (SK) 4.
Feb 17: Estudiantes de La Plata (Arg) 5 Wanderers (Uru) 0.

OTHER INTERNATIONALS

Feb 2: Penarol (Uru) 2 Armenia XI 1.
Feb 6: Costa Rica U-23 2 Chung Dinos (SK) 0.
Feb 11: Brazil U-23 2 Slavia (Bul) 0.
Feb 14: Brazil U-23 1 Dnipro Dnipropetrov (Ukr) 0.

CONCACAF

BERMUDA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vasco da Gama	12	10	1	1	37	12	31
North Village Reds	12	7	5	0	23	8	26
Dandy T Hornets	12	5	3	4	27	17	18
Pembroke Hamilton	12	5	2	5	19	18	17
St George's Colts	12	5	2	5	18	18	17
Southampton R	12	5	1	6	13	16	16
Somerset Trojans	12	4	3	5	13	17	15
Boulevard Blazers	12	1	8	3	14	14	11
Devonshire Colts	12	2	5	5	11	12	11
Somerset Eagles	12	1	0	11	8	51	3

EL SALVADOR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FAS	24	15	3	6	49	24	48
Aquila	24	12	7	5	40	21	43
Luis Angel Firpo	24	12	7	5	41	23	43
Atletico Marte	24	9	8	7	34	34	35
Municipal Limeno	24	7	10	7	21	24	31
Alianza	24	7	8	9	26	27	29
ADET	24	7	7	10	33	37	28
Dragon	24	8	4	12	32	42	28
El Roble	24	4	9	11	26	47	21
Tiburones	24	4	7	12	18	43	19

COSTA RICA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alajuela	31	16	11	4	53	24	59
Herediano	31	17	4	10	43	30	55
Saprissa	31	15	9	7	44	22	54
Caragines	30	14	9	7	36	27	51
Belen	29	12	10	7	38	24	46
Puntarenas	31	13	6	12	36	36	45
Carmelita	31	10	9	12	35	39	39
Ramonense	31	11	5	15	39	48	38
San Carlos	31	11	4	16	29	50	37
Perez Zeledon	31	9	9	13	26	32	36
Turrialba	30	7	5	18	24	45	26
Guanacaste	31	6	5	20	29	55	23

GUATEMALA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sacachispas	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Municipal	3	1	2	0	6	0	5
Amatitlan	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Xelaju	3	1	1	1	3	8	4
Aurora	3	0	3	0	1	1	3
Comunicaciones	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Escuintla	3	0	2	1	0	2	2
Suchitepequez	3	0	2	1	1	3	2

RELEGATION GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Izabal JC	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Coban Imperial	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Tally-Juca	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Mictlan	3	0	1	2	4	7	1

HONDURAS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Motagua	21	10	7	4	31	20	37
Olimpia	21	8	11	2	38	20	35
Victoria	21	8	9	4	28	23	33
Platense	21	9	6	6	24	21	33
Marathon	21	8	8	5	30	25	32
Vida	21	4	11	6	22	28	23
Real Espana	21	4	8	9	20	32	20
Real Maya	21	3	11	7	19	24	20
Independiente	21	2	13	6	16	23	19
Broncos	21	2	10	9	16	28	16

ASIAN CUP

(Group winners qualify for finals)
(United Arab Emirates qualify as hosts)
(Japan qualify as defending champions)

GROUP 1
(Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)

04.08.96	Vietnam v Taiwan
05.08.96	South Korea v Guam
07.08.96	Vietnam v Guam
08.08.96	South Korea v Taiwan
10.08.96	Guam v Taiwan
11.08.96	Vietnam v South Korea

GROUP 2
(Hong Kong)

30.01.96	Hong Kong v Philippines.....8-0
30.01.96	China v Macao.....7-1
01.02.96	Philippines v China
01.02.96	Hong Kong v Macao
04.02.96	Macao v Philippines
04.02.96	Hong Kong v China

GROUP 3
(Bangkok)

27.06.96	Thailand v Maldives
27.06.96	Burma v Singapore
29.06.96	Thailand v Burma
29.06.96	Maldives v Singapore
01.07.96	Thailand v Singapore
01.07.96	Burma v Maldives
(Singapore)	
04.07.96	Thailand v Maldives
04.07.96	Singapore v Burma
07.07.96	Thailand v Burma
07.07.96	Singapore v Maldvives
09.07.96	Burma v Maldives
09.07.96	Singapore v Thailand

GROUP 4
(Selangor, Malaysia)

02.03.96	Malaysia v Indonesia
04.03.96	Indonesia v India
07.03.96	Malaysia v India

GROUP 5
(Tehran, Iran)

10.06.96	Oman v Sri Lanka
10.06.96	Iran v Nepal
12.06.96	Oman v Nepal
12.06.96	Iran v Sri Lanka
14.06.96	Sri Lanka v Nepal
14.06.96	Iran v Oman
(Muscat, Oman)	
17.06.96	Iran v Sri Lanka
17.06.96	Oman v Nepal
19.06.96	Iran v Nepal
19.06.96	Oman v Sri Lanka
21.06.96	Nepal v Sri Lanka
21.06.96	Oman v Iran

GROUP 6
(Amman, Jordan)

07.08.96	Jordan v Pakistan
07.08.96	Iraq v Bangladesh
09.08.96	Pakistan v Iraq
09.08.96	Jordan v Bangladesh
11.08.96	Bangladesh v Pakistan
11.08.96	Jordan v Iraq

GROUP 7
(home & away)

21.06.96	Kazakhstan v Qatar
21.06.96	Syria v Kazakshtan
28.06.96	Qatar v Syria
05.07.96	Qatar v Kazakhstan
12.07.96	Kazakhstan v Syria
19.07.96	Syria v Qatar

GROUP 8
(home & away)

14.04.96	Uzbekistan v Bahrain
17.04.96	Tajikistan v Bahrain
08.05.96	Tajikistan v Uzbekistan
26.05.96	Bahrain v Uzbekistan
31.05.96	Bahrain v Tajikistan
19.06.96	Uzbekistan v Tajikistan

GROUP 9
(Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)

24.01.96	Saudi Arabia v Kyrgyzstan.....3-0
26.01.96	Yemen v Kyrgyzstan.....1-0
28.01.96	Saudi Arabia v Yemen.....4-0
31.01.96	Saudi Arabia v Kyrgyzstan.....2-0
02.02.96	Kyrgyzstan v Yemen
04.02.96	Yemen v Saudi Arabia

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Yemen	2	1	0	1	1	4	3
Kyrgyzstan	3	0	0	3	0	6	0

GROUP 10
(home & away)

10.03.96	Turkmenistan v Kuwait
22.03.96	Kuwait v Turkmenistan
12.05.96	Lebanon v Turkmenistan
26.05.96	Turkmenistan v Lebanon
09.06.96	Lebanon v Kuwait
20.06.96	Kuwait v Lebanon

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Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Dec 3-20, 1996

IRAN

	P	W	D	L	Pts
Pirouzi	30	15	12	3	57
Bahman	30	13	12	5	51
Esteghlal of Tehran	29	13	9	7	48
Pas	30	13	6	11	45
Sepahan	29	11	8	10	41
Esteghlal of Ahvaz	30	12	5	13	41
Mashinsazi	30	11	8	11	41
Keshavarz	30	9	13	8	40
Bargh	29	10	9	10	39
Poli-acreele	29	10	8	11	38
Shamooshak	30	10	8	12	38
Junoob	30	9	9	12	36
Malavan	29	8	10	11	34
Shahredari	30	6	10	14	28
Ararat	29	7	7	15	28
Saipa	26	5	12	9	27

LATEST RESULTS: PIROUZI 3 ESTEGHLAL OF AHVAZ; BAHMAN 3 SAIPA 1; JUNOOB 2 ESTEGHLAL OF TEHRAN 2; SHAMOOSHAK 1 BARGH 0; KESHAVARZ 5 PAS 0; POLI-ACREELEL 1 MASHINSAZI 0; SHAHREDARI 3 SEPAHAN 1

IRANIAN CUP - Quarter-final

ZOBAHAH OF ISFAHAN 1
ARARAT 1
*Ararat won on away goals

WORLD SERVICE

FULL FIXTURES FOR THE 1998 QUALIFIERS . . .

WORLD CUP – 1998

EUROPE

(15 teams qualify)
(France qualify as hosts)
(Group winners qualify)
(Best runner-up qualifies)
(Remaining runners-up enter play-offs)

GROUP 1

24.04.96	Greece v Slovenia
01.09.96	Greece v Bosnia
01.09.96	Slovenia v Denmark
09.10.96	Denmark v Greece
09.10.96	Bosnia v Croatia
09/10.11.96	Slovenia v Bosnia
10.11.96	Croatia v Greece
29.03.97	Croatia v Denmark
02.04.97	Croatia v Slovenia
02.04.97	Bosnia v Greece
30.04.97	Denmark v Slovenia
30.04.97	Greece v Croatia
08.06.97	Denmark v Bosnia
20.08.97	Bosnia v Denmark
06.09.97	Croatia v Bosnia
06/07.09.97	Slovenia v Greece
10.09.97	Denmark v Croatia
10.09.97	Bosnia v Slovenia
11.10.97	Greece v Denmark
11.10.97	Slovenia v Croatia

GROUP 2

01.09.96	Moldova v England
05.10.96	Moldova v Italy
09.10.96	Italy v Georgia
09.10.96	England v Poland
09.11.96	Georgia v England
10.11.96	Poland v Moldova
12.02.97	England v Italy (tbc)
29.03.97	Italy v Moldavia
02.04.97	Poland v Italy
30.04.97	England v Georgia
30.04.97	Italy v Poland
31.05.97	Poland v England (tbc)
07.07.97	Georgia v Moldova
14.07.97	Poland v Georgia (tbc)
10.09.97	England v Moldova
10.09.97	Georgia v Italy
24.09.97	Moldova v Georgia (tbc)
07.10.97	Moldova v Poland (tbc)
11.11.97	Italy v England
11.11.97	Georgia v Poland

GROUP 3

02.06.96	Norway v Azerbaijan
31.08.96	Azerbaijan v Switzerland
01.09.96	Hungary v Finland
06.10.96	Finland v Switzerland
09.10.96	Norway v Hungary
10.11.96	Switzerland v Norway
10.11.96	Azerbaijan v Hungary
02.04.97	Azerbaijan v Finland
30.04.97	Norway v Finland
30.04.97	Switzerland v Hungary
08.06.97	Finland v Azerbaijan
08.06.97	Hungary v Norway
20.08.97	Finland v Norway
20.08.97	Hungary v Switzerland
06.09.97	Switzerland v Finland
06.09.97	Azerbaijan v Norway
10.09.97	Hungary v Azerbaijan
10.09.97	Norway v Switzerland
11.10.97	Finland v Hungary
11.10.97	Switzerland v Azerbaijan

GROUP 4

01.06.96	Sweden v Byelorussia
31.08.96	Austria v Scotland
31.08.96	Byelorussia v Estonia
01.09.96	Latvia v Sweden
05.10.96	Latvia v Scotland
05.10.96	Estonia v Byelorussia
09.10.96	Sweden v Austria
09.10.96	Estonia v Scotland
09.10.96	Byelorussia v Latvia
09.11.96	Austria v Latvia
10.11.96	Scotland v Sweden
29.03.97	Scotland v Estonia
02.04.97	Scotland v Austria
30.04.97	Austria v Estonia
30.04.97	Sweden v Scotland
30.04.97	Latvia v Byelorussia
18.05.97	Estonia v Latvia
08.06.97	Latvia v Austria
08.06.97	Estonia v Sweden
08.06.97	Byelorussia v Scotland
20.08.97	Estonia v Austria
20.08.97	Byelorussia v Sweden
06.09.97	Austria v Sweden
06.09.97	Latvia v Estonia
06.09.97	Scotland v Byelorussia
10.09.97	Byelorussia v Austria
10.09.97	Sweden v Latvia
11.10.97	Austria v Byelorussia
11.10.97	Sweden v Estonia
11.10.97	Scotland v Latvia

GROUP 5

01.09.96	Israel v Bulgaria
01.09.96	Russia v Cyprus
08.10.96	Luxembourg v Bulgaria
09.10.96	Israel v Russia
10.11.96	Cyprus v Israel
10.11.96	Luxembourg v Russia
14.12.96	Cyprus v Bulgaria
15.12.96	Israel v Luxembourg
29.03.97	Cyprus v Russia
30.03.97	Luxembourg v Israel
02.04.97	Bulgaria v Cyprus
30.04.97	Israel v Cyprus
30.04.97	Russia v Luxembourg
08.06.97	Bulgaria v Luxembourg
08.06.97	Russia v Israel
20.08.97	Bulgaria v Israel
07.09.97	Luxembourg v Cyprus
10.09.97	Bulgaria v Russia
11.10.97	Cyprus v Luxembourg
11.10.97	Russia v Bulgaria

GROUP 6

24.04.96	Yugoslavia v Faroe Islands
02.06.96	Yugoslavia v Malta
31.08.96	Faroe Islands v Slovakia
04.09.96	Faroe Islands v Spain
18.09.96	Czech Republic v Malta
22.09.96	Slovakia v Malta
06.10.96	Faroe Islands v Yugoslavia
09.10.96	Czech Republic v Spain
23.10.96	Slovakia v Faroe Islands
10.11.96	Yugoslavia v Czech Republic
13.11.96	Spain v Slovakia
14/15.12.96	Spain v Yugoslavia
18.12.96	Malta v Spain
12.02.97	Spain v Malta
31.03.97	Malta v Slovakia
02.04.97	Czech Republic v Yugoslavia
29/30.04.97	Yugoslavia v Spain
29/30.04.97	Malta v Faroe Islands
21.05.97	Slovakia v Czech Republic
07/08.06.97	Yugoslavia v Slovakia
07/08.06.97	Faroe Islands v Malta
07/08.06.97	Spain v Czech Republic
20.08.97	Czech Republic v Faroe Islands
06.09.97	Faroe Islands v Czech Republic
10.09.97	Slovakia v Yugoslavia
24.09.97	Malta v Czech Republic
24.09.97	Slovakia v Spain
11.10.97	Malta v Yugoslavia
11.10.97	Czech Republic v Slovakia
11.10.97	Spain v Faroe Islands

GROUP 7

02.06.96	San Marino v Wales
31.08.96	Wales v San Marino
31.08.96	Belgium v Turkey
05.10.96	Wales v Holland
09.10.96	San Marino v Belgium
09.11.96	Holland v Wales
10.11.96	Turkey v San Marino
14.12.96	Belgium v Holland
14/15.12.96	Wales v Turkey
29.03.97	Wales v Belgium
29.03.97	Holland v San Marino
02.04.97	Turkey v Holland
30.04.97	San Marino v Holland
30.04.97	Turkey v Belgium
07.06.97	Belgium v San Marino
20.08.97	Turkey v Wales
06.09.97	Holland v Belgium
10.09.97	San Marino v Turkey
11.11.97	Holland v Turkey
11.11.97	Belgium v Wales

GROUP 8

24.04.96	Macedonia v Liechtenstein
01.06.96	Iceland v Macedonia
31.08.96	Liechtenstein v Rep. Ireland
31.08.96	Romania v Lithuania
05.10.96	Lithuania v Iceland
09.10.96	Iceland v Romania
09.10.96	Rep. Ireland v Macedonia
09.10.96	Lithuania v Liechtenstein
09.11.96	Liechtenstein v Macedonia
10.11.96	Rep. Ireland v Iceland
14.12.96	Macedonia v Romania
29.03.97	Romania v Liechtenstein
02.04.97	Lithuania v Romania
02.04.97	Macedonia v Rep. Ireland
30.04.97	Romania v Rep. Ireland
30.04.97	Liechtenstein v Lithuania
07.06.97	Rep. Ireland v Liechtenstein
07.06.97	Macedonia v Iceland
11.06.97	Iceland v Lithuania
19.08.97	Liechtenstein v Iceland
20.08.97	Rep. Ireland v Lithuania
20.08.97	Romania v Macedonia
06.09.97	Liechtenstein v Romania
06.09.97	Iceland v Rep. Ireland
06.09.97	Lithuania v Macedonia
10.09.97	Romania v Iceland
10.09.97	Lithuania v Rep. Ireland
11.10.97	Rep. Ireland v Romania
11.10.97	Iceland v Liechtenstein
11.10.97	Macedonia v Lithuania

GROUP 9

31.08.96	Northern Ireland v Ukraine
31.08.96	Armenia v Portugal
05.10.96	Northern Ireland v Armenia
05.10.96	Ukraine v Portugal
09.10.96	Armenia v Germany
09.10.96	Albania v Portugal
09.11.96	Germany v Northern Ireland
09.11.96	Portugal v Ukraine
09.11.96	Albania v Armenia
14.12.96	Northern Ireland v Albania
14.12.96	Portugal v Germany
29.03.97	Northern Ireland v Portugal
29.03.97	Albania v Ukraine
02.04.97	Albania v Germany
02.04.97	Ukraine v Northern Ireland
30.04.97	Germany v Ukraine
30.04.97	Armenia v Northern Ireland
07.05.97	Ukraine v Armenia
07.06.97	Portugal v Albania
07.06.97	Ukraine v Germany
20.08.97	Portugal v Armenia
20.08.97	Ukraine v Albania
20.08.97	Northern Ireland v Germany
06.09.97	Germany v Portugal
06.09.97	Armenia v Albania
10.09.97	Germany v Armenia
10.09.97	Albania v Northern Ireland
11.10.97	Germany v Albania
11.10.97	Armenia v Ukraine
11.10.97	Portugal v Northern Ireland

AFRICA

(5 teams qualify)

FIRST ROUND

Sudan v Zambia
Namibia v Mozambique
Tanzania v Ghana
Swaziland v Gabon
Uganda v Angola
Mauritius v Zaire
Malawi v South Africa
Madagascar v Zimbabwe
Guinea Bissau v Guinea
Rwanda v Tunisia
Congo v Ivory Coast
Kenya v Algeria
Burundi v Sierra Leone
Mauritania v Burkina Faso
Togo v Senegal
Gambia v Liberia
Two-leg play-offs, winners advance)

SECOND ROUND

Two-leg play-off winners enter draw with CAMEROON, NIGERIA, MOROCCO AND EGYPT.
Five 4-team groups, winners qualify

ASIA

(Three or four teams qualify)

FIRST ROUND

GROUP 1
Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Taiwan
GROUP 2
Iran, Maldives, Syria, Kirgyzstan
GROUP 3
United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan
GROUP 4
Japan, Nepal, Oman, Macao
GROUP 5
Uzbekistan, Yeman, Indonesia, Cambodia
GROUP 6
South Korea, Thailand. Hong Kong
GROUP 7
Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore
GROUP 8
China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan
GROUP 9
Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan
GROUP 10
India, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Philippines
Winners advance

SECOND ROUND

Two groups of 5, winners & runners-up advance

THIRD ROUND

Two-leg play-offs, winners qualify (losers enter play-off)

LOSER'S PLAY-OFF

Winners enter two-leg play-off with Oceania winners for final berth

CONCACAF

(Three Teams Qualify)

FIRST ROUND

CARIBBEAN ZONE

Series A	Aruba v Dominican Republic
Series B	Bahamas v St. Kitts and Nevis
Series C	Guyana v Grenada
Series D	Dominica v Antigua

Two-leg play-offs, winners advance

SECOND ROUND

CARIBBEAN ZONE

Bermuda v Trinidad and Tobago
Puerto Rico v St Vincent
Cayman Islands v Cuba
St Kitts and Nevis v St Lucia
Winner Series C v Haiti
Surinam v Jamaica
Winner Series D v Barbados
Winner Series A v Dutch Antilles
Two-leg play-offs, winners advance

THIRD ROUND

CARIBBEAN ZONE
Two-leg play-off, winners advance to semi-final round

CENTRAL AMERICAN ZONE

Nicaragua v Guatemala
Belize v Panama
Winners advance to semi-final round

SEMI-FINAL ROUND

GROUP 1
United States, Costa Rica, Caribbean third-round winner, Guatemala-Nicaragua winner
GROUP 2
Canada, El Salvador, Belize-Panama winner, Caribbean third-round winner
GROUP 3
Mexico, Honduras, two Caribbean third-round winners
Top two in each group advance

FINAL ROUND

League system, top three qualify

OCEANIA

(0 or 1 nation qualifies)

FIRST ROUND

MELANESIAN GROUP
Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
Single round-robin, winner advances

POLYNESIAN GROUP
Cook Islands, Tonga, Western Samoa
Winner plays Melanesian runners-up

SECOND ROUND

GROUP 1
Australia, Tahiti, Polynesian/Melanesian play-off winner
GROUP 2
Fiji, New Zealand, Melanesian Group winner
Winners advance

THIRD ROUND

Two-leg play-offs, winner advances to play Asian fourth-place team

SOUTH AMERICA

(Brazil qualify as holders, top four South American teams from a nine-nation tournament also qualify)

ROUND-ROBIN

24.04.96	Argentina v Bolivia
24.04.96	Venezuela v Uruguay
24.04.96	Colombia v Paraguay
24.04.96	Ecuador v Peru
02.06.96	Ecuador v Argentina
02.06.96	Uruguay v Paraguay
02.06.96	Venezuela v Chile
02.06.96	Peru v Colombia
07.07.96	Peru v Argentina
07.07.96	Chile v Ecuador
07.07.96	Colombia v Uruguay
07.07.96	Bolivia v Venezuela
01.09.96	Argentina v Paraguay
01.09.96	Colombia v Chile
01.09.96	Ecuador v Venezuela
01.09.96	Bolivia v Peru
09.10.96	Venezuela v Argentina
09.10.96	Uruguay v Bolivia
09.10.96	Ecuador v Colombia
09.10.96	Paraguay v Chile
10.11.96	Chile v Uruguay
10.11.96	Bolivia v Colombia
10.11.96	Paraguay v Ecuador
10.11.96	Peru v Venezuela
15.12.96	Argentina v Chile
15.12.96	Uruguay v Peru
15.12.96	Venezuela v Colombia
15.12.96	Bolivia v Paraguay
12.01.97	Uruguay v Argentina
12.01.97	Peru v Chile
12.01.97	Venezuela v Paraguay
12.01.97	Bolivia v Ecuador
12.02.97	Colombia v Argentina
12.02.97	Ecuador v Uruguay
12.02.97	Paraguay v Peru
12.02.97	Bolivia v Chile
02.04.97	Bolivia v Argentina
02.04.97	Uruguay v Venezuela
02.04.97	Paraguay v Colombia
02.04.97	Peru v Ecuador
30.04.97	Argentina v Ecuador
30.04.97	Paraguay v Uruguay
30.04.97	Chile v Venezuela
30.04.97	Colombia v Peru
08.06.97	Argentina v Peru
08.06.97	Ecuador v Chile
08.06.97	Uruguay v Colombia
08.06.97	Venezuela v Bolivia
06.07.97	Paraguay v Argentina
06.07.97	Chile v Colombia
06.07.97	Peru v Bolivia
06.07.97	Venezuela v Ecuador
20.07.97	Argentina v Venezuela
20.07.97	Bolivia v Uruguay
20.07.97	Colombia v Ecuador
20.07.97	Chile v Paraguay
20.08.97	Uruguay v Chile
20.08.97	Colombia v Bolivia
20.08.97	Ecuador v Paraguay
20.08.97	Venezuela v Peru
10.09.97	Chile v Argentina
10.09.97	Peru v Uruguay
10.09.97	Colombia v Venezuela
10.09.97	Paraguay v Bolivia
12.10.97	Argentina v Uruguay
12.10.97	Chile v Peru
12.10.97	Paraguay v Venezuela
12.10.97	Ecuador v Bolivia
16.11.97	Argentina v Colombia
16.11.97	Uruguay v Ecuador
16.11.97	Peru v Paraguay
16.11.97	Chile v Bolivia

. . . UPDATED RESULTS AND FIXTURES FOR THE ATLANTA 96 OLYMPIC GAMES QUALIFIERS . . .

OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

PRELIMINARY ROUND

15.01.95	Burundi v Djibouti .....w/o
	Djibouti withdrew
15.01.95	Lesotho v Namibia.....1-0
15.01.95	Burkina Faso v Guinea-Bissau ...w/o
	Guinea-Bissau withdrew
28.01.95	Namibia v Lesotho.....3-0
	Namibia won 3-1 on agg

1ST ROUND

GROUP 1

15.04.95	Nigeria v Kenya 0-0
16.04.95	Egypt v Mauritius.....1-0
16.04.95	Zambia v Botswana.....2-0
16.04.95	Zimbabwe v Malawi.....4-0
29.04.95	Kenya v Nigeria 0-3
29.04.95	Malawi v Zimbabwe.....0-0
30.04.95	Botswana v Zambia.....1-4
30.04.95	Mauritius v Egypt.....0-1
	Zimbabwe, Nigeria,Egypt & Zambia qualify

GROUP 2

14.04.95	Algeria v Guinea 1-1
16.04.95	Mali v Togo.....1-2
16.04.95	Morocco v Senegal 0-0
16.04.95	Tunisia v Burkina Faso 4-1
29.04.95	Senegal v Morocco 1-0
30.04.95	Guinea v Algeria 2-0
30.04.95	Togo v Mali.....1-0
30.04.95	Burkina Faso v Tunisia 1-0
	Guinea,Togo, Tunisia & Senegal qualify

GROUP 3

15.04.95	South Africa v Burundi 1-1
16.04.95	Cameroon v Namibia.....0-0
16.04.95	Gabon v Angola 1-3
16.04.95	Ghana v Congo 0-0
29.04.95	Namibia v Cameroon.....0-1
30.04.95	Angola v Gabon.....2-0
30.04.95	Burundi v South Africa 4-1
30.04.95	Congo v Ghana 0-0
	Ghana, Burundi, Cameroon & Angola qualify

2ND ROUND

12.08.95	Nigeria v Egypt 3-2
12.08.95	Senegal v Guinea 2-3
12.08.95	Tunisia v Togo 1-1
13.08.95	Burundi v Cameroon 1-0
13.08.95	Ghana v Angola 3-1
13.08.95	Zimbabwe v Zambia.....1-1
25.08.95	Egypt v Nigeria 1-1
27.08.95	Angola v Ghana 1-0
27.08.95	Cameroon v Burundi 2-0
27.08.95	Guinea v Senegal 2-0
27.08.95	Togo v Tunisia 2-1
27.08.95	Zambia v Zimbabwe.....1-2
	Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Tunisia, Guinea, Ghana & Cameroon qualify

3RD ROUND

GROUP 1

03.03.96	Zimbabwe v Nigeria
16.03.96	Nigeria v Zimbabwe

GROUP 2

03.03.96	Tunisia v Guinea
17.03.96	Guinea v Tunisia

GROUP 3

03.03.96	Ghana v Cameroon
17.03.96	Cameroon v Ghana

Group winners qualify for Atlanta

CONCACAF

NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICAN GROUP

PRELIMINARY ROUND

17.02.95	Guatemala v Belize.....4-0
05.03.95	Belize v Guatemala.....2-2
	Guatemala won 6-2 on agg

1ST ROUND

05.05.95	Guatemala v El Salvador 0-1
26.05.95	El Salvador v Guatemala 1-1
29.07.95	Bermuda v Costa Rica 0-2
06.08.95	Costa Rica v Bermuda 5-0
03.12.95	Panama v Mexico.....0-5
13.12.95	Mexico v Panama.....4-0
	Mexico, Costa Rica & El Salvador qualify

2ND ROUND

GROUP 1

04.06.95	Antigua v Cayman Is.....1-2
04.06.95	Jamaica v St. Lucia 6-0
06.06.95	Antigua v Jamaica 1-6
06.06.95	Cayman Is v St. Lucia.....0-4
08.06.95	Jamaica v Cayman 7-0
08.06.95	St Lucia v Antigua 3-0

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica	3	3	0	0	19	1	9
St Lucia	3	2	0	1	7	6	6
Cayman Islands	3	1	0	2	2	12	3
Antigua	3	0	0	3	2	11	0

GROUP 2

23.08.95	Guyana v St Vincent.....1-2
25.08.95	Trinidad v Guyana 5-0
27.08.95	Trinidad v St Vincent 2-1

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trinidad & Tobago	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
St Vincent	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Guyana	2	0	0	2	1	7	0

FINAL ROUND

(AT EDMONTON, CANADA)

10.05.96	Canada v Jamaica
11.05.96	Costa Rica v Trinidad & Tobago
11.05.96	Mexico v El Salvador
13.05.96	Canada v Trinidad & Tobago
13.05.96	Mexico v Costa Rica
13.05.96	El Salvador v Jamaica
15.05.96	Canada v El Salvador
15.05.96	Jamaica v Costa Rica
15.05.96	Mexico v Trinidad & Tobago
17.05.96	Canada v Costa Rica
17.05.96	Mexico v Jamaica
17.05.96	El Salvador v Trindad & Tobago
19.05.96	Canada v Mexico
19.05.96	Jamaica v Trinidad & Tobago
19.05.96	El Salvador v Costa Rica
	Winners qualify for Atlanta, runners-up face Australia in a play-off

CONMEBOL

FIRST ROUND

GROUP A

(AT TANDIL, ARGENTINA)

18.02.96	Brazil v Peru 4-1
19.02.96	Bolivia v Uruguay.....0-2
21.02.96	Brazil v Paraguay.....3-1
21.02.96	Peru v Uruguay.....2-4
23.02.96	Bolivia v Brazil 1-4
23.02.96	Paraguay v Peru 4-2
25.02.96	Peru v Bolivia
25.02.96	Uruguay v Paraguay
27.02.96	Paraguay v Bolivia
27.02.96	Uruguay v Brazil

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	3	3	0	0	11	3	9
Uruguay	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Paraguay	2	1	0	1	5	5	3
Bolivia	2	0	0	2	1	6	0
Peru	3	0	0	3	5	12	0

GROUP B

(AT MAR DEL PLATA, ARGENTINA)

18.02.96	Argentina v Ecuador.....6-0
18.02.96	Venezuela v Colombia.....1-0
20.02.96	Argentina v Chile 2-1
20.02.96	Ecuador v Colombia.....3-3
22.02.96	Chile v Ecuador 4-0
22.02.96	Venezuela v Argentina.....0-3
24.02.96	Colombia v Chile 3-3
24.02.96	Ecuador v Venezuela.....2-5
26.02.96	Chile v Venezuela
26.02.96	Colombia v Argentina

TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	3	3	0	0	11	1	9
Venezuela	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Chile	3	1	1	1	8	5	4
Colombia	3	0	2	1	6	7	2
Ecuador	4	0	1	3	5	18	1

Top 2 in each group qualify for final round

FINAL ROUND

01.03.96	A1 v B2 (Tandil, 00.35)
01.03.96	B1 v A2 (Mar del Plata, 01.00)
03.03.96	A1 v A2 (Mar del Plata, 19.00)
03.03.96	B1 v B2 (Mar del Plata, 21.00)
06.03.96	A2 v B2 (Mar del Plata, 23.00)
06.03.96	A1 v B1 (Mar del Plata, 01.00)
	Top two qualify for Atlanta

OCEANIA

(AT ADELAIDE)

13.01.96	Australia v Vanuatu.....9-1
13.01.96	Fiji v Solomon Islands.....4-0
15.01.96	New Zealand v Fiji 1-2
15.01.96	Solomon Islands v Vanuatu....2-1
17.01.96	Vanuatu v New Zealand 0-10
17.01.96	Solomon Islands v Australia ...2-0
	match awarded to Solomons
19.01.96	Australia v Fiji 10-0
19.01.96	New Zealand v Solomons 2-0
21.01.96	Fiji v Vanuatu 4-0
21.01.96	New Zealand v Australia.....0-5
23.01.96	Fiji v New Zealand 1-3
23.01.96	Vanuatu v Solomon Islands....1-1
25.01.96	Solomon Islands v Fiji.....1-1
25.01.96	Vanuatu v Australia.....0-12
27.01.96	Australia v Solomon Islands ...7-0
27.01.96	New Zealand v Vanuatu 5-1
29.01.96	Fiji v Australia 0-5
29.01.96	Solomons v New Zealand 0-6
31.01.96	Australia v New Zealand.....0-1
31.01.96	Vanuatu v Fiji 1-0

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia	8	6	0	2	48	4	18
New Zealand	8	6	0	2	28	9	18
Fiji	8	3	1	4	12	21	10
Solomon Is	8	2	2	4	6	22	8
Vanuatu	8	1	1	6	5	43	4

Australia qualify for play-off

PLAY-OFF

1ST LEG

26.05.96	CONCACAF r-up v Australia

2ND LEG

02.06.96	Australia v CONCACAF r-up

Winners qualify for Atlanta

ASIA

1ST ROUND

GROUP A

24.06.95	Singapore v Malaysia 2-0
02.07.95	China v Singapore 4-0
09.07.95	China v Malaysia 2-1
16.07.95	Malaysia v Singapore 0-0
22.07.95	Malaysia v China 0-2
29.07.95	Singapore v China 1-3

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	4	4	0	0	11	2	12
Singapore	4	1	1	2	3	7	4
Malaysia	4	0	1	3	1	6	1

GROUP B

26.05.95	Thailand v Japan 0-5
28.05.95	Japan v Chinese Taipei 4-1
30.05.95	Thailand v Chinese Taipei 7-0
08.06.95	Thailand v Chinese Taipei 5-0
11.06.95	Japan v Chinese Taipei 6-0
14.06.95	Japan v Thailand 1-0

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	4	4	0	0	16	1	12
Thailand	4	2	0	2	12	6	6
Chinese Taipei	4	0	0	4	1	22	0

GROUP C

21.05.95	Hong Kong v South Korea.....0-5
25.05.95	Indonesia v South Korea 1-2
30.05.95	Indonesia v Hong Kong 1-0
19.08.95	South Korea v Hong Kong.....7-0
22.08.95	South Korea v Indonesia 1-0
26.08.95	Hong Kong v Indonesia 1-4

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	4	4	0	0	15	1	12
Indonesia	4	2	0	2	6	4	6
Hong Kong	4	0	0	4	1	17	0

GROUP D

07.10.95	Pakistan v Oman 0-2
11.10.95	Pakistan v India 1-2
18.10.95	Oman v India 3-2
22.10.95	India v Pakistan 3-1
25.10.95	Oman v Pakistan 6-0
29.10.95	India v Oman 1-2

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oman	4	4	0	0	13	3	12
India	4	2	0	2	8	7	6
Pakistan	4	0	0	4	2	13	0

GROUP E

20.05.95	Kyrgyzstan v Uzbekistan 1-5
20.05.95	Tajikistan v Kazakhstan 0-3
10.06.95	Kyrgyzstan v Kazakhstan 2-2
10.06.95	Uzbekistan v Tajikistan 2-0
24.06.95	Uzbekistan v Kazakhstan 1-2
24.06.95	Tajikistan v Kyrgyzstan 3-0
12.08.95	Uzbekistan v Kyrgyzstan 2-1
12.08.95	Kazakhstan v Tajikistan 3-1
02.09.95	Kazakhstan v Kyrgyzstan 6-0
02.09.95	Tajikistan v Uzbekistan 1-1
07.10.95	Kyrgyzstan v Tajikistan 5-4
07.10.95	Kazakhstan v Uzbekistan 3-1

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kazakhstan	6	5	1	0	19	5	16
Uzbekistan	6	3	1	2	12	8	10
Tajikistan	6	1	1	4	9	14	4
Kyrgyzstan	6	1	1	4	9	22	4

GROUP F

24.08.95	Saudi Arabi v Syria 2-0
31.08.95	Kuwait v Saudi Arabi 0-1
08.09.95	Syria v Kuwait.....0-1
15.09.95	Syria v Saudi Arabi 0-1
21.09.95	Saudi Arabi v Kuwait 0-0
28.09.95	Kuwait v Syria.....2-2

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	4	3	1	0	4	0	10
Kuwait	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Syria	4	0	1	3	2	6	1

GROUP G

13.09.95	Turkmenistan v Iran.....2-4
23.09.95	UAE v Turkmenistan.....2-1
29.09.95	Iran v UAE.....1-1
05.10.95	Iran v Turkmenistan.....4-0
15.10.95	Turkmenistan v UAE.....1-1
22.10.95	UAE v Iran.....1-0

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE	4	2	2	0	5	3	8
Iran	4	2	1	1	9	4	7
Turkmenistan	4	0

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02843	NATH'S NASTY NUTTERS	Marish Nath	113	4
02535	FC AMERICA	Joseph Costa	109	5
03352	DEJA VOODOO	J.J. Whiting	109	5
04729	GRIZZLIES	Chris Macknie	109	5
02520	HALF PAST XI	D. Curry	108	6
02962	SHAMROCK SPARTAK	Fergal Ryan	108	6
03003	IYAZ RESERVES	Sam Tarakowicq	108	6
03953	STOP BHAFC DYING OF GREED	Roy Chuter	108	6
04386	THE JETTA'S EUROPEAN ADVENTURE NO.	Mr. S. Rattray	108	6
04423	F.C. KACAR	Rebecca Kacar	108	6
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03778	THE FIRE BELCHERS (EURO) (TOUR)	Peter Andrew	107	7
04406	FRANTASTIC XI	Paul Francis	107	7
04692	LUDLOW LIONS	Rick Lima	107	7
04695	LUDLOW LUSITANO	R. Michael Lima	107	7
04846	FEYO ROVERS	O.A. Okusanya	107	7
02754	EURO FINAL HERE I COME	Alan Grieve	106	8
02307	DEPORTIVO LOS ANGELES	Martin Cutler	104	9
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Whether this has been achieved by either recommendation from present members, *Catalyst* magazine or through *WORLD SOCCER*, a 'well done' to you all should be recorded.

Early members may remember Steve Darby, formerly of Liverpool and now based in Australia, who provided a session at our very first Convention in 1994. He recently wrote to us about a recent coaching course he undertook in Fifji, the full report of which will appear in *Catalyst*. Here are some prime snippets:

'As they say in the old movies, "somebody has to do the job!" So when I was asked by FIFA (Oceania) to conduct a coaching course in the paradise of Fiji, I forced myself to go.

'The thirst for knowledge in these areas makes staffing these courses a pleasure not just because it's 32 degrees in Fiji and two degrees in Barnsley. The course at the National Stadium in Suva was like my first time at the AFCAT Convention. It smelt of football (plus the curry we had for lunch every day) but when I was greeted by the Director of Coaching Anand Swami and the star candidate of the Course, Arvind Singh, in their AFCAT fleecy jackets, we all smiled and eagerly produced our copies of *Catalyst*.

'So everybody knows that football is universal. Premier League and Serie A results are followed avidly in all obscure pockets.

'It really is a great game when you can watch a candidate put on a brilliant coaching session explaining the attacking role of the sweeper in a back five, (similar to the session by Dario Gradi at Crewe) in three different languages – Fijian, Hindi and English for me.

'The same candidate also had to be asked to put his boots on for the session. This was not for the demonstration as he could kick further without boots, than I ever could with, but "just in case he trod on one of the poisonous canetoads hopping across the field." '

Steve concludes: 'The open-minded philosophy to coaching of AFCAT's many presenters and members have been one of the major developments in English Soccer for years. Keep up the Great Work.'

The word amazingly therefore continues to spread. The photo above shows Executive President Mr Morewa of SAFA with other SAFA members and representatives from AFCAT in England and South Africa. Another first for AFCAT in England and South Africa. Another first for AFCAT and already a much-talked about visit.

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WORLD SOCCER

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LAST WORD

Cracks in the Cups

Charlton . . . 'endorsing the heresy'

JOAO, the moralist! Joao, the savour of football's soul! Joao, the man who stands above the sordid conflict, a shining example to us all; and most of all to UEFA!

Whoever could have envisaged the ruthless old water polo player in this guise? Other than Havelange himself, of course. Yet it has happened. Sort of.

The bizarre aspect of it is that, pots and kettles apart, *chuzpah* and self-delusion carefully excluded, Havelange happens to be right. What UEFA plans to do with the European Cup and probably the Cup-winners Cup, is an abomination. An abject, seedy surrender to Mammon. A bitter revelation that as far as our corpulent Swedish friend Lennart Johansson and his cohorts are concerned, money not only talks; it shouts and screams, drowning out every other consideration.

Last year, much earlier in the season, Barcelona, Milan, Juventus and, somewhat surprisingly, Anderlecht came up with the proposal that certain clubs should be admitted to the European Champions Cup on the basis of their past records. The alarming word was that Johansson thought it A Good Idea.

It's not, of course; it is a rotten idea, completely subverting what Cups of any kind should be about. Let us go back a long way in history. To the early years, last century, of the Football Association, when Charles Alcock; the first, Old Harrovian, secretary, put up the idea of a tournament based on Harrow's Cock House Cup.

This was a straight knockout affair, all the way through to the Final. And so the FA Cup remained; with the one exception of the immediate post-war season when, who knows quite why, it became a two-legged tournament until the semi-finals. Then it reverted quite properly to what it always had been.

Except that now, alas, with the oppressive pressure of fixtures, second games which end in a draw after extra time are shamefully decided on penalties.

When the European Cup began, it was flawed from the first as a sporting Cup contest by the fact that ties would be home and away; not sudden death. A great setback for would-be Davids, who might accurately hurl their slingshot into Goliath's head on the first encounter, but were unlikely to survive the return on Philistine territory!

Then, of course, we had the sombre arrival of the mini-league, the very antithesis of Cup football, and a manifest failure in its first incarnation. So much so that at least we now have quarter-finals again.

And at least, for the fleeting moment, we have teams qualified on genuine merit. Winners of their native Championship, previous, immediate, winners of the Cup itself.

But now, the truly repugnant idea is to allow certain countries a second team, on the basis of a club's performances over the past 10 years. And shame on that icon of the game, that white hen who never laid a stray, Bobby Charlton, for endorsing the heresy.

What we are talking about, of course, is not even historical prowess, and the cylindrical shape of their president seems wholly appropriate, in the circumstances.

Behind this vile idea, and the previous bastardisation of the Euro Cup, there also, of course, lies fear. Fear of the Silvio Berlusconis of this world, whose original, deplorable, idea of a TV tournament linked not to current form, but to the status of participating clubs, panicked UEFA into initiating the mini-league element into the competition.

Despite noises off by Arsenal's David Dein, there seems little chance, or danger, at the moment of a European League Championship. But hovering on the horizon, with television calling the shots, as always, is the prospect of a world league.

One hears there might be 11 European clubs, three or so from South America, a couple from Africa, and one from Japan. I hope not. Haven't we enough football at the moment, and enough competitions?

'What UEFA plans to do with the European Cup, and probably the Cup-winners Cup, is an abomination. An abject, seedy surrender to Mammon . . . Money not only talks; it shouts and screams, drowning out every other consideration'

Arsenal's Dein . . . European pipe dre

Berlusconi . . . 'materialism rearing its ugly head'

This way to rebellion

SILVIO BERLUSCONI, with characteristic tact and charm, a couple of years or so ago poured scorn on international football, and insisted that it should be swept under the carpet in favour of the club game, the true generator of talent and money.

Materialism had reared its ugly head again; but now you do begin to wonder whether he might at least have had a point of a kind.

For international football is making the most ludicrous, excessive inroads on club football. Look at the proliferation of often unnecessary tournaments, which take players away from their clubs.

The Olympic tournament is an especially ripe example. Suddenly, as an Under-23 affair which, deplorably, perverts itself by allowing three over-age players, it has taken on a spurious importance, and even in its qualifying stages, Heaven help us, is draining stars from their club teams.

Midway through February, for example, Internazionale had to let Roberto Carlos go, for weeks to play for Brazil. By the same token, Middlesbrough, in a deep state of crisis after weeks of bad results, had to part with the clever little Juninho.

This followed hard on the African Nations Cup, in which Leeds United and Yeboah, Radebe and Masinga, and Milan were obliged to give up George Weah. International teams can now not only call on players based abroad seven times a year; they also can insist on having them well before any given game, making still further inroads on a club's resources.

If this kind of thing goes on, I can see the big clubs rebelling, and I for one would not blame.

Then, alas, there's the execrable InterToto, which seems to be going from strength to unwarranted strength. It reminds me somewhat of the earlier days of the Football League Cup, as conceived and promoted by the late Alan Hardaker, largely as a deliberate affront to the FA and its far more glamorous competition.

The League Cup, which has gone through so many titular changes, began in obscurity. Then, rather like an ugly girl with a rich father, it had all sorts of bounties, dowries, showered upon it, to make it attractive to potential suitors.

The Final would be played at Wembley which, whatever its failings as a modern stadium (and it still, ideally rebuilt, seems the one and only temple of the English game, to me) retains its mystique and magnetism. A place in the UEFA Cup was quite arbitrarily granted, with UEFA standing by and doing nothing about the anomaly. And in due course like some ugly pterodactyl, it took wing.

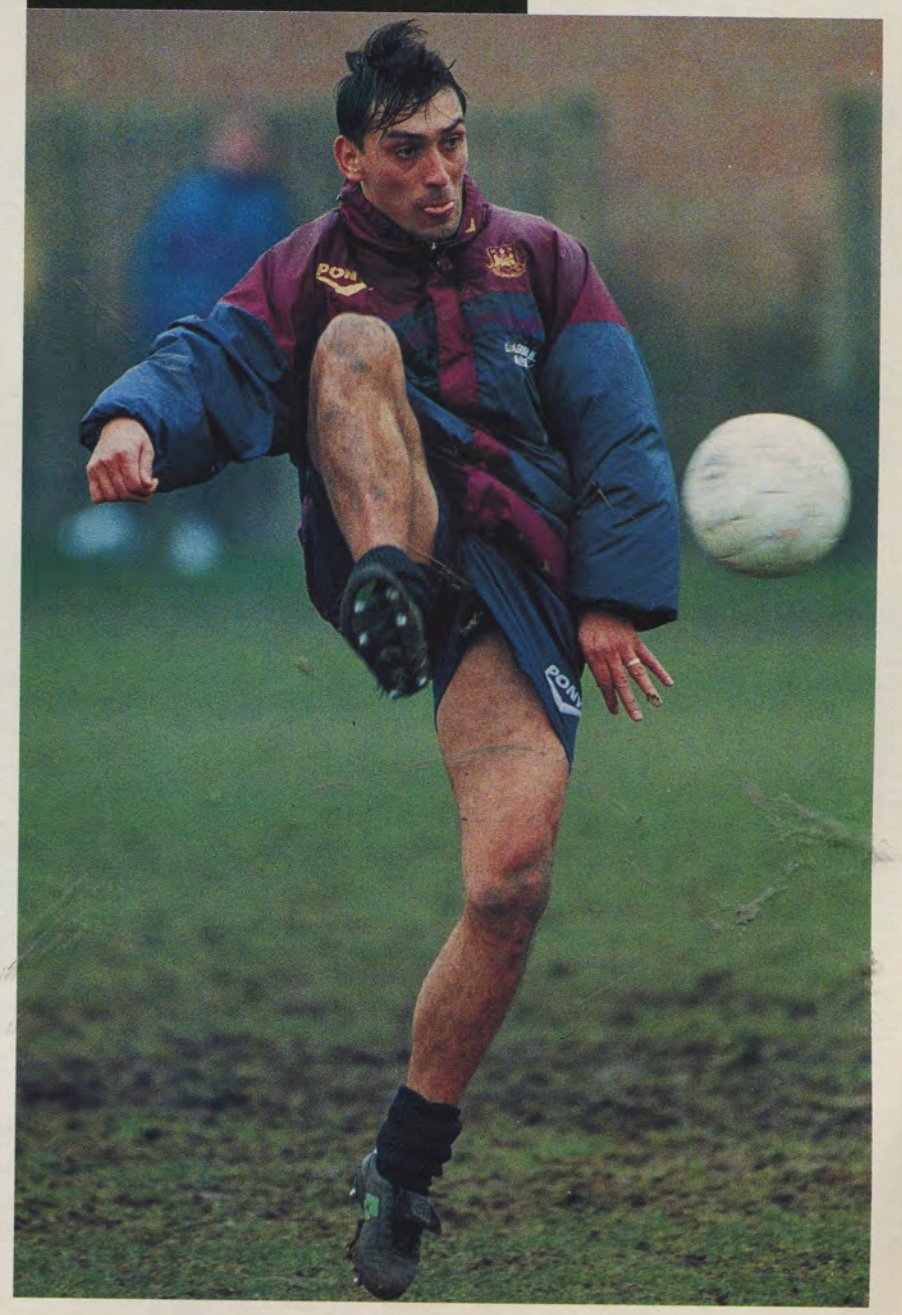
The InterToto won't. And good luck to the Italian Players Union for seething and protesting about the fact that they were not consulted when their authorities decided, for this summer at least, to let clubs participate.

Resistance to talent

SHAME on our dog-in-the-manger Professional Footballers Association for their truly perverse opposition to star players from outside the Euro Community playing here, when any old footballer from the EU itself can arrive unhindered.

The cases of Ilie Dumitrescu and Marc Hottiger, initially barred on the Byzantine basis of not having played enough League games last season, have thrown harsh light on an absurd anomaly. And a mean-souled resistance to true talent.

Dumitrescu . . . barred talent



Soccer Cities

GLASGOW

Alan Fairley on the unique sectarian divide on the Clyde

Split personalities . . . the Celtic-Rangers rivalry is as fierce as any in world football

A FEW weeks ago, during a match played in Glasgow between Partick Thistle and Rangers, Partick striker Rod McDonald, a practising Roman Catholic, blessed himself as he left the field at half-time, an action he carries out in every game he plays.

It is the type of action which is common on football pitches around the world, from Rio to Rome, from Milan to Montevideo, and which rarely elicits a second glance.

In Glasgow, however, it is a bookable offence.

Having carried out his personal religious blessing in front of the staunchly Protestant Rangers support, McDonald was deemed to have made a provocative gesture and was shown the yellow card. To compound the situation, he was sent off later in the game for a second bookable offence, increasing the significance of his earlier indiscretion.

PARTICK THISTLE
Firhill Park

This particular incident underlines the fact that, due to intense sectarian rivalry, Glasgow's footballing culture remains unique. It is highly ironic, then, that the incident featured a black, English Partick Thistle player.

Partick have always been regarded as the city's politically neutral, alternative team, creating a safety value for those not wishing to become embroiled in the bitter nature of the divide which exists between Glasgow's two principal club sides, Rangers and Celtic.

Observers around the world have often wondered why two Scottish teams could engender such a level of sectarian hatred, the root cause of which is derived from a historical divide in another country, Northern Ireland.

The basis of this rivalry can be found in the histories of the respective clubs. Celtic were formed in 1888 by a group of Catholic priests in the east end of Glasgow. In addition to playing football, the club's laudable objective was to raise funds on behalf of the poor Irish immigrant families who had settled in that part of the city.

Rangers on the other hand, had been founded 15 years earlier by affluent members of a Glasgow rowing club. There was no apparent attachment to any particular religious culture during the club's formative years but, in the early part of the 20th century, there was a huge migration of Protestant Ulstermen from Belfast to Glasgow, where work was available to them on the expanding River Clyde shipyards. The incomers quickly adopted Rangers as their team and the Protestant-Catholic rivalry between the Ibrox club and their Celtic counterparts was rapidly nurtured.

RANGERS
Ibrox Park

Various attempts have been made to defuse the sectarian hatred among the city's football supporters. In 1989, Graeme Souness made history when he signed Mo Johnston for Rangers, the player becoming the first high-profile Catholic to join the club and, only recently, Celtic chairman Fergus McCann launched the 'Bhoys Against Bigotry' campaign, designed to help remove the undercurrent of sectarianism from Glasgow's footballing philosophy.

Irrespective of these worthy gestures, however, the problem remains inherent and the incident involving Rod McDonald merely highlights the extent of the required remedial work.

Leaving aside the myriad social implications which often disfigure Glasgow's footballing image, the city has, over the years, acquired a reputation as one of the world's genuine footballing capitals.

The historical Rangers-Celtic dominance of the domestic game in Scotland is well documented and has been challenged only fleetingly for well over a century.

Celtic, managed by the late Jock Stein, became the first British club, indeed the first club from northern Europe, to succeed in the Champions Cup, defeating Internazionale in a memorable final in Lisbon in 1967. The Parkhead side reached the final again three years later, only to suffer an extra-time defeat at the hands of Feyenoord.

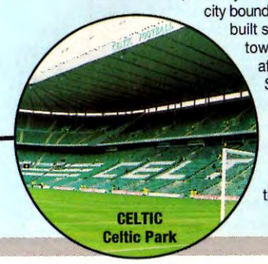
Also in 1967, Rangers reached, for the second time in their history, the European Cup-winners Cup Final, losing in extra-time to the emerging Bayern Munich. Five years later, Rangers won the trophy by defeating Moscow Dynamo in Barcelona.

Since then, European success has eluded Glasgow's teams and, in recent times, the domestic game in Scotland has been dominated by Rangers, who have attracted quality players to Scotland from England and abroad and secured seven successive League titles.

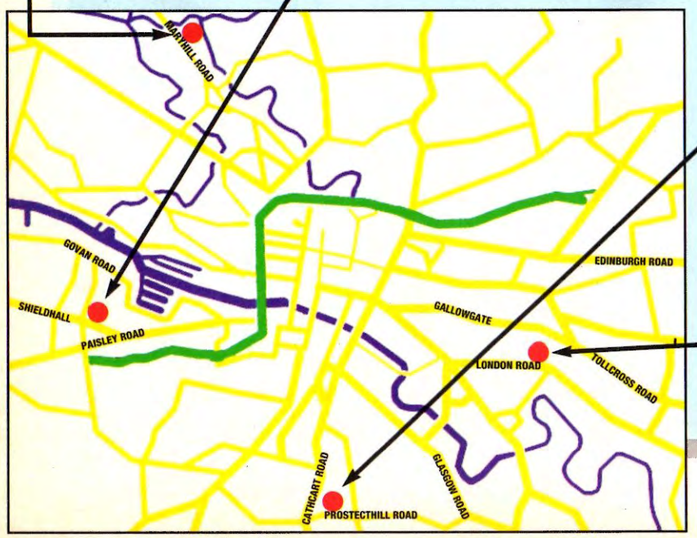
QUEENS PARK
Hampden Park

Elsewhere in the city can be found the aforementioned Partick Thistle, who play at Firhill Park, and Scotland's oldest club side, Queens Park, who are based at the country's national stadium, Hampden Park, and who retain a unique position in the senior game by retaining their 129-year-old amateur status.

Glasgow's 'fifth club', Clyde, quaintly nicknamed Bully Wee, recently relocated outside the city boundaries to a purpose-built stadium in the new town of Cumbernauld after a century at Shawfield, three Cup wins and six Second Division titles – a slight interruption to the almost constant successes of their neighbours.



CELTIC
Celtic Park



Flashback

A symbol of success – but not as far as soccer in North America is concerned. Pele, pictured playing for New York Cosmos in the closing stages of his career, pulled in the crowds for a time, but even he could not give the game a future in the States. Now yet another attempt to make the game viable there is being made, with the start of Major League Soccer. We wish them all well – players, officials, spectators and sponsors – but feel we are not alone in thinking that this one will go the way of all the others.

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